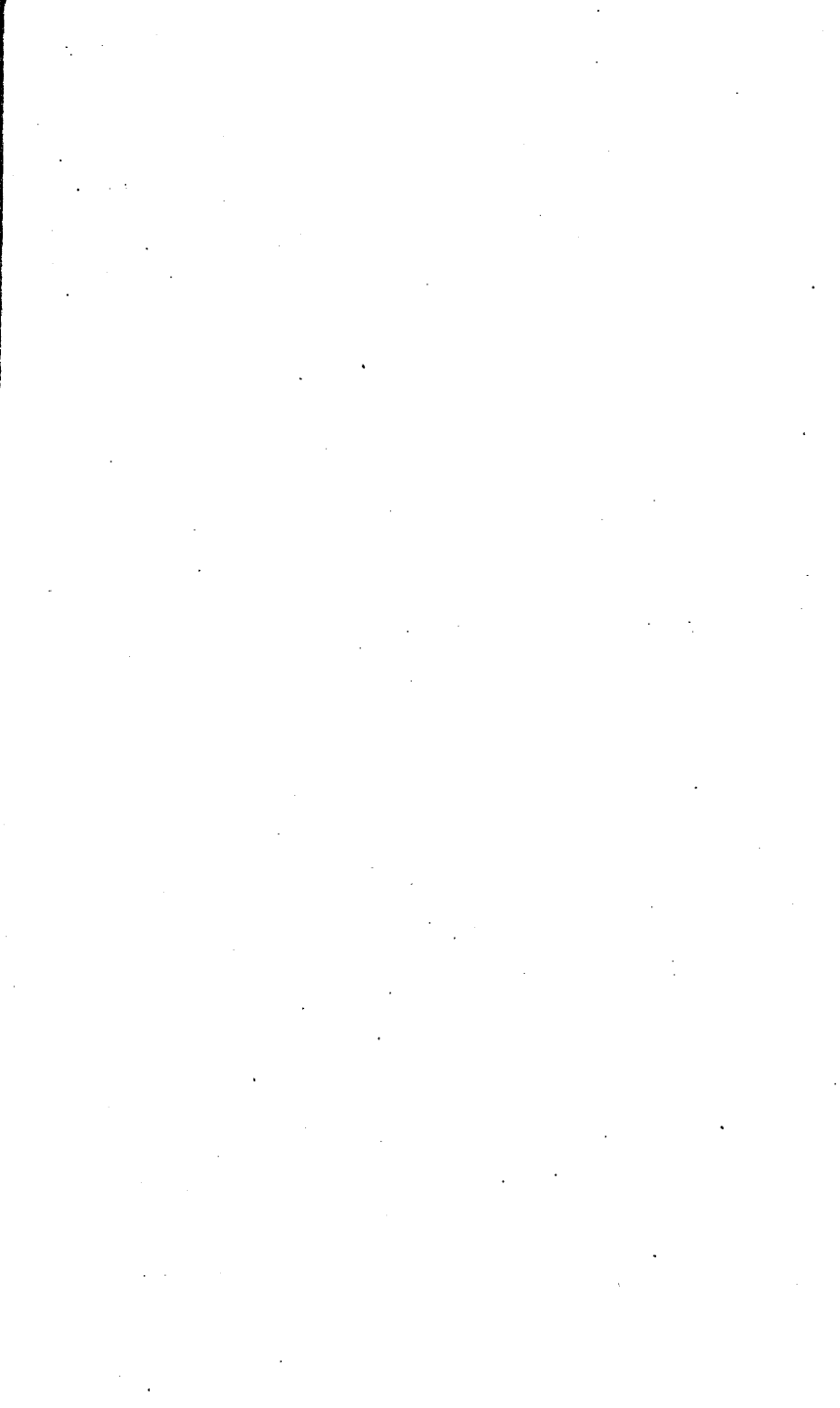


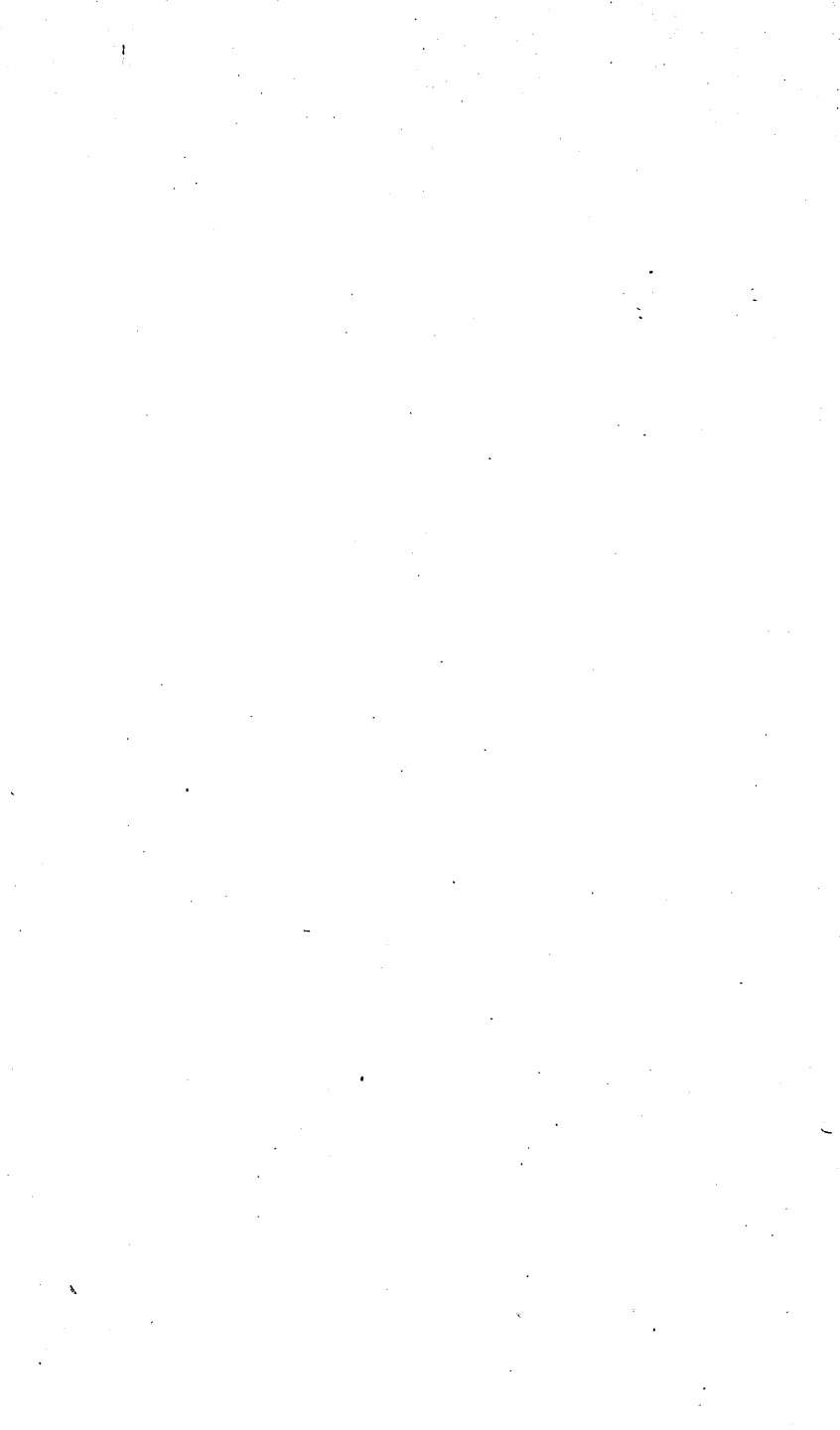
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# THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD



# THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD

A RE-STATEMENT OF MISSIONARY  
PRINCIPLES

*by*

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TO

DR. AND MRS. EDWARD CADBURY,  
who first thought of, and by large gifts made possible,  
at the Selly Oak Colleges,  
the Department of Missions,  
for better service of  
the Gospel in the World





## PREFACE

ON commencing to teach the theory and practice of missions, I found no suitable text-book available, so have attempted to supply the want. This book reproduces the main substance of a year's course of weekly lectures on Missionary Principles at the Selly Oak Colleges. Its main stress is upon theory, because among British missionaries theory is weaker than practice, and there is sometimes a curious prejudice against "theology." But practice is continually borne in mind, and the last five chapters deal throughout with obviously practical questions, though considerations of space have prevented the inclusion of illustrations from experience. I hope the book may be useful not only to those preparing for future service abroad but also to experienced missionaries who wish to think over again those things which lie at the roots of their life and service. Much of its content has actually been discussed with groups of missionaries on furlough from various countries.

Most of it was already written before the appearance of Dr. Kraemer's great work *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World*. It has been a real happiness to find many of its positions endorsed therein, though naturally the language used is different, and this smaller book covers somewhat different ground.

It is constructed in three parts, the first six chapters dealing with those questions of faith and theology which determine our view of the Christian

message; the next five showing the impact of that message upon great religious groups ; and the last five stating governing principles for the main forms of modern missionary activity. In the middle section more space is given to Hinduism and Buddhism than to other religions because the writer's missionary experience was in India, but the briefer references to Africa and to the Far East can easily be expanded by those whose experience lies there. The intention is only to indicate a method and approach, and the fact that the Christian message has some special relevance for adherents of every faith.

To any of my friends of other races who may read this book may I say that I know they dislike the word "native," and therefore have substituted for it "national" where possible, but that after all "native" is a good word which ought to be rescued from evil associations. We are all proud to be natives of our respective countries, and writing as a native of mine I find that no other word serves as well, so have not attempted to eschew it altogether. Its use is meant to be entirely respectful.

Obviously I owe debts to many people, as is indicated by quotations from numerous books. My colleague, Rev. John Foster, suggested the title. It is the least part of the encouragement which I owe to my wife that she copied the whole manuscript and made the index.

December, 1938.

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## CHAPTER I

### A TIME FOR TAKING STOCK

NINETEEN hundred years ago a life was lived which supremely revealed God. Those in closest contact with it said "Jesus is Lord," and set out to tell that to the whole world.

Out of such a beginning has grown a vast and many-sided enterprise maintained by hundreds of organizations, national and international—a cumbersome business, whose detail no one human mind can compass. A bibliography of Roman Catholic missions alone fills nine tomes each with about a thousand pages.<sup>1</sup> Facts and experience have been accumulated and set in order; there is growing up a new applied science. But the task is not much more than begun, for most of the world has still not heard or else not believed that Jesus is Lord. And since it is certain that while all else changes the human need of God remains, the task must go on, and be done better.

Any big undertaking needs periodical overhauling, and those who carry on missions know that this is necessary now. That is why, in spite of colossal difficulties and expense, it was held to be essential to hold a meeting of the International Missionary Council in the Far East in 1938. One chapter is closing and another beginning, for missions as for the world at large. The chapter

<sup>1</sup>*Bibliotheca Missionum*, Streit-Dindinger, Aachen 1916-36.

now ending tells of unequalled sacrifice and achievement; sacrifice, for a host of messengers have poured out their lives; and achievement, for in every race men and women have received the message and banded themselves into witnessing churches. There has been no human enterprise more successful, in proportion to the number of people and quantity of resources employed, nothing which has so affected the course of history or the mind and heart of humanity. But achievement has not been everywhere uniform, nor progress steady. While new lands have been entered and millions of adherents won, in some old lands such as North Africa and Central Asia the mosque has replaced the church. In our own day we have seen great Russia's public repudiation of the faith. Nor may we ignore the drift away from religion in the countries in which missions originated. There is matter here for careful study of causes. Robert Bridges, reflecting on these things, saw humanity as a Sphinx, with human head perplexed but animal body all alive :

But the great Light shineth in great darkness, the seed  
that fell by the wayside hath been trodden under foot,  
that which fell on the rock is nigh withered away;  
while loud and louder thro' the dazed head of the Sphinx  
the old lion's voice roareth o'er all the lands.

Profound changes in the great world once viewed  
as far away in the dark; in the countries once  
known collectively as Christendom; and in the  
thought of Christians, especially regarding other  
religions, compel a review of the enterprise which  
began under widely different conditions. To go no  
further back than the beginning of modern Protest-

ant missions at the end of the eighteenth century, it was a different world from ours which haunted the mind of William Carey<sup>1</sup> before he went to India, or the mind of that strange party which sailed in the *Duff* for the South Seas.<sup>2</sup> That was remote and by most forgotten; this is pressing in upon us with every day's newspaper and wireless. Somewhere beyond the fringe of the white man's civilization lay many barbarous regions, of which explorers could tell interesting tales, but no-one thought of their future affecting the white man's home and his livelihood. Now the comfortable old dividing line between barbarous and civilized has become blurred and nearly rubbed out, for a kind of standardized culture of the western type has spread to the remotest islands, machinery has had its levelling influence, and some sons of stone-age savages in New Guinea are as familiar with aeroplanes as if they lived in Croydon. Away in the East, shrouded in magic and mystery, lay ancient civilizations about which we knew nothing except that they never changed. To-day we wish they would change less rapidly and leave us of the West in peace. Japan is as pressing a problem to our statesmen as was France in those days. Philosophies and cults from the East seem to some to menace the values of our western life as much as our western penetration has seemed to some orientals to threaten what they hold dear.

Meanwhile an easterner himself challenges the validity of the whole way of thinking which lies behind the talk of eastern and western as essentially

<sup>1</sup> *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, by William Carey, 1791.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, by Richard Lovett, Vol. I, pp. 119 f.

different. The history of culture and a study of the differing rates of its diffusion under various influences suggests that the distinction between East and West has little significance, and will receive less and less attention in the future.<sup>1</sup> Whatever objections may be raised to the westernization of the East or to the easternization of the West, nothing can stop the interpenetration, or the gradual emergence of one comprehensive world culture combining the results of human experience in both hemispheres. In so far as mission programmes rested upon a contrast between the blessings of civilization and the horrors of savagery or upon differences between eastern and western ways of life they are rapidly becoming obsolete. It was not missions but non-Christian governments which abolished the veiling of women, suddenly in a day, in both Turkey and Persia. Before long the difference in manners and customs between people in Polynesia and in Europe will be no more significant than the similar differences between people in Yorkshire and in Cornwall.

That being so, it may at first seem strange that the reduction in the apparent size of the world through improved communications and the spread of one world-culture should have coincided with intensification everywhere of cultural and national sensibilities, but on reflection it is natural enough. When families by some emergency are thrown into uncomfortably close quarters, the first result is not that they all rejoice in what is common, but that each clings to what is distinctive of its own and liable to be lost in the general medley. That is why not merely post-war Europe but the world is suffering from

<sup>1</sup> *East versus West*, by P. Kodanda Rao, not yet published.

exaggerated nationalisms. It is right to keep one's ancient speech, to preserve with gratitude the past history which has given birth to common joys and sorrows. But to exalt national heritage into the supreme value to which must be subordinated all others in the spiritual life is to make it usurp the place of religion. It was with profound truth that nationalism was a few years ago characterized as "Man's Other Religion"<sup>1</sup>. Because of this "other religion" the mission which once was welcomed in the Near or the Far East because it brought schools, hospitals and better ways of life, is to-day frowned upon as a foreign menace to the national heritage, and Christianity and patriotism are more than ever regarded as incompatible.

But what of Christendom itself? The very word sounds a trifle archaic. Is there any longer a "Christian domain" when in none of the countries hitherto called Christian does a majority of the population regularly join in the worship of God? Here too old boundary-lines are blurred, and no-one now would use such an expression as sounded right enough in 1389, "in cristendom or in hethenesse." Nor could anyone to-day cite without fear of challenge as did Archbishop Trench in 1849, "the standing miracle of a Christendom commensurate and almost synonymous with the civilized world."<sup>2</sup> Christendom still exists in the sense that there are countries whose history and institutions have received a Christian imprint such as could not be in China or India. But neither "cristendom" nor hethenesse" are any longer purely geographical

<sup>1</sup> *Nationalism, Man's Other Religion*, by E. Shillito. S.C.M., 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *The Miracles*, Preliminary Essay VI, quoted *Oxford English Dictionary*.

terms: there is much "hethenesse" in London and New York, and much "cristendom" in Calcutta and Shanghai. We have lived to see strange things in the countries which gave birth to the Christian mission, not merely the ancient opposition of "the world, the flesh, and the devil" but the re-birth of paganism long since believed slain, or the demand on Caesar's behalf of a loyalty which belongs to God, or the claim that science and the humanities without religion can meet the needs of the human spirit. The "Conflict of Religious Ideas" which Dr. Glover showed us in the early Roman Empire is being waged again in the countries once known as Christendom.

It is not surprising that the Church in every branch has suffered losses in numbers and resources, or that it is with growing difficulty struggling to finance its social and religious crusades. Most missionary societies are looking back to some year in the past for their "peak income," in spite of excellent educational efforts and of the heroic devotion of many faithful supporters. A church shrinking in its own membership cannot continue for long to expand its missionary activity, and the filling up again of the *home* churches with worshipping people is a necessary prelude to any strengthening of the weakened front line abroad. This is not the place to discuss the extent to which communism or fascism have drawn away adventurous youth, or modern humanism has both removed adherents from the Church and weakened those who remain by subtle penetration of their thoughts about life and the world. The Christian Gospel in due course will by its intrinsic truth outshine all rivals, though for a

time it be obscured in the world. So long as the Church does not weaken in confidence in her Lord, her difficulties from temporary shortage of numbers are no more serious than they were in those first centuries when the Church evangelized the Roman Empire.

That confidence is at the heart of all things, and fortunately there is no sign of its weakening. The Church's faith and the theology which articulates and expounds it have grown lately more clear and positive. Karl Barth has given a tonic to Christians in other lands besides his own, even to those who have not heard his name. He is not widely followed in Britain or America because he does not seem to take sufficient account of that general light which has always shone in man's darkness though the darkness comprehended it not. But his prophetic insistence that there really is a Word of God to the world, compared with which nothing human has the slightest importance, is not falling on deaf ears. The fundamental faith of the Church is a sound foundation on which to build the missionary enterprise.

Nevertheless, it has in thousands of lives been temporarily covered up by confused thinking mixed with kindness of heart. We are so anxious to avoid claims to superiority over our friends in other religions that we accept without examination their claim to have without Christ the equivalent of what we have in Him. The superior attitude is hateful; all our dealings must be marked by love and humility. We must rejoice in the lofty ethical teaching or the profound religious insight of saints outside as well as within the Christian circle. But we do our friends harm in leaving them content to be without



our Lord, for there is no substitute for Him or for the redemption He offers. At heart all Christians feel it, but the call to-day is for clear thinking and speech. Why and how is it necessary that even Indians who have fed their souls on the Upanishads, or followers of Buddha the compassionate, or Chinese who have walked with dignity in ancient ways of harmonious life—better people, some of them, than we are—must at all costs hear and receive the message of the lordship of Christ? If the mind of the whole Church were clear on that issue, it is still big enough to take hold of the power of God and evangelize the world.

But the Christian Mission makes no small or easy claim. The story of the human race on this planet is a long one, and has lately been stretching out backwards through the discoveries of archæology. Many and great civilizations have grown up to what looked like finality and permanence, then collapsed. Many thoughts about the unseen have lived in the minds of men; animism, polytheism, monotheism have had their place and all have it still somewhere in the world. Yet it is claimed that in one part of the globe, south-west Asia, and in one period of time, say between 1400 B.C. and 40 A.D. (a period short when set against the long ages of what has been and what probably will be), certain things which happened so revealed the eternal God that the whole future of the race depends upon its acceptance of that revelation. Can that claim be substantiated in relation to the enlarged world faced by modern men? These things are not simple or easy to demonstrate. It is clear that our stocktaking must not be confined to facts, figures and methods, but go down to basic

principles of theology and history in which all activities are rooted.

Meanwhile the great enterprise proceeds; it cannot wait for all problems to be solved. Of many signs of its vigorous life three merit special mention here, its successes abroad, its promotion of Christian unity, and its attraction for the best of youth in the home lands. In some countries, notably India and Africa, it is winning multitudes of new adherents and planting churches which in due course will take root and become naturalized in their new soil. In every country it is penetrating the mind of many who lead their fellows. To meet its own new needs in our unified world it has developed national and international organs for combined action, and thereby made the greatest contribution in our time to the true catholicity of the Church of God. "To-day there is no more apparent and momentous revelation of that eternal Church of God than the world-wide Christian mission."<sup>1</sup> The International Missionary Council has proved a gift of God to our generation, pending the advent of that greater gift of a truly Catholic Church, the need of which grows yearly more profound. How much might be achieved by more unity of planning and direction is suggested by recent remarkable expansion of the Roman Catholic Church, at a time when it has seemed as if she must be weakened by political entanglements and intellectual obscurantism. It behoves us to learn from her unity rather than to criticize her mistakes, and to pray that the day may come quickly when the one-ness of all Christians in their Lord may be

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Söderblom, *Report of Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council*, Vol. III, p. 134.

effective enough in the whole Church to be obvious to the whole world.

The third notable indication of vitality is in the continued power to evoke costly service from modern youth. Recently the Bishop of Durham spoke of the effect upon our corporate moral life of the volunteering for missionary service in distant and dangerous places. "The tradition of heroism does not perish. It flows ever through the nation, swollen by a thousand contributions of personal service, a stream of holy and gracious influences, fertilizing character and beautifying life."<sup>1</sup> Changed conditions might well have affected that stream: sometimes indeed the missionary societies have had cause for anxiety regarding their supply of candidates. There is less now than formerly of the lure of the unknown in foreign service, less chance of being eaten by cannibals, or even of a premature grave in the tropics, though this is not eliminated. The white race can no longer play "My Lady Bountiful" around the world, but must sit on a level with others and hear rude words from those who think her riches the cause of their poverty. The missionary finds himself part of a complicated situation where not all the right things are on the Christian side and all the wrong things on the non-Christian. Heroism is still needed, but it is the sort of heroism which may send a brilliant man into the home ministry with its limitations and hardships, its occasional futility and apparent defeat. Only added to this in the case of the missionary candidate is the sense of the great world choosing in our day between Jesus and other lords, and the sound of an inward voice calling to far places.

<sup>1</sup> Gifford Lectures, 1936.

Young men and women know these things and have few illusions about what awaits them, but many are offering themselves still, quite as many in proportion to Church membership as in former days. Christ does not cease to call, and the stream which beautifies and fertilizes life in the home lands as well as abroad shows no sign of drying up.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLACE OF THEORY IN MISSIONS. THEIR BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

MISSIONARIES, especially of British extraction, are usually intensely practical. By the time a man has served ten or fifteen years abroad he has passed through so many experiences unknown to those who sit at home that he feels, with justification, that he knows his people and his job and needs no-one else to tell him about them. Two people he kindly humours or bears with resignation, the globe-trotter forming lightning impressions, and the delegation from the home-land trying to enforce some policy which he can call "theoretical." Judged by such tests as literary output or the establishing of professorial chairs, Great Britain is definitely behind other countries in the study of missions. Nowhere have better books been published of a descriptive and inspiring kind, or on particular countries, problems and methods, but there is no study of the theory and fundamental principles or even the history of missions to serve as an English equivalent of Warneck's three-volume "Missionslehre." Were it written, it is doubtful whether it would find a publisher.

Yet sometimes qualms disturb even the missionary's complacency regarding the superiority of practice to theory. The schools maintained by the

practical person who is sure that new-fangled theories of education "do not apply here," may be full of pupils and successful when judged by local standards, but a survey of their real results upon the lives of the children who crowd them raises uneasy questions. Is their superiority to other surrounding schools that of the one-eyed man in the country of the blind? The same practical person, asked about indigenous forms of worship, replies that when he asks his Africans or Chinese or Indians for suggestions they never have any to offer. He forgets that when pupils show no originality the fault may rest with the teacher. Many years ago he or his predecessor taught them one method of worship, a close imitation of that which he had learnt as a boy in his home country. That was the only practical thing to do at the time, but because along with the practice no theory of worship was imparted, the one form became stereotyped in the native mind. After all, in the home country we do not regard doctors or chemists or teachers as equipped for their task without an understanding of its theory as well as practice. It is certainly possible to theorize to excess, but that danger threatens few missionaries from Britain or America. Much more serious is the danger of practice unilluminated by theory becoming a barren repetition of good works whose original aim and significance have been forgotten.

It seems a little presumptuous or premature to speak of a science of missions, so much still remains to be done, but there can be no doubt of the right of the general tree of knowledge to put forth such a branch. Thousands of missionaries for generations have been trying experiments and reflecting

upon their results, some of which have been recorded. Methods once regarded with hope have been tried and rejected, others which seemed uncertain are now firmly established. A great body of ordered human experience is waiting to be put together and made generally available. New missionaries, like new doctors or new boat-builders, should have from the start the benefit of the study and experience of their predecessors. The best way of applying it later in their stations must be their individual discovery, as the doctor must cure his own patients and the farmer win a crop from his own fields. But the ascertained and ordered results of human experience up to date should be part of the starting equipment. Among the applied sciences the science of missions has as rightful a place as that of medicine or agriculture. For missions are no new and sudden growth. The missionary idea is older than Christianity and embedded in every document of what we call the Christian revelation, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. God's purpose is for all mankind.

But perhaps we are assuming that which should be proved. The Reformers who placed the Bible in the hands of the ordinary Christian did not institute Foreign Missions. There are many different views of the Bible. Modern historical criticism has started not a few questions. Are the Biblical foundations of missions quite unshaken?

As to the Reformers, there is no shadow of doubt that they believed that the Gospel is for the elect among all mankind, and Erasmus in his *Ecclesiastes, or the Method of Preaching*,<sup>1</sup> advocated missions while condemning the method of compulsion which had

<sup>1</sup> For a long and striking quotation from this book see *Short History of Christian Missions*, by George Smith, 7th ed., pp. 116-118.

sometimes been employed. But it must be admitted that Luther and Calvin and Zwingli failed to realize the need for the Church to go into all the world instead of waiting for all the world to come to it. Preoccupation with their own colossal tasks, which sometimes amounted to a desperate struggle for life, and which were essentially a mission to pag-anized Europe, is a partial explanation. In Luther's case his peculiar eschatology accounts for more. The gospel, he thought, had already reached the appointed limits of its extension through the preaching of the early Apostles. Now that the Reformers were preaching the pure Gospel to the Gentiles, which for Luther always meant the Christians as opposed to the Jews, the conditions for the second coming mentioned in Matthew xxiv, 14, were fulfilled, and the Lord was at hand. Thus the adventist belief which with many in our own day has proved a powerful missionary impulse, because the carrying of the gospel to all might hasten the longed-for Second Coming, for Luther made missions unnecessary. The doubts regarding such an attitude at once provoked in us who are in daily contact with all parts of the world, were not felt then because the non-Christian world, apart from the Turks, was too far away to be realized. We do not know how much our own missionary impulse owes to having the wide world continually forced upon our attention. Moreover the routes to the recently discovered lands were under Catholic, mainly Spanish and Portuguese, control, and the Reformers would not in any case have been permitted to carry their message westward to America or eastward to India.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note the nearness to each other of the following dates : Discovery of Cape of Good Hope, 1486 ; of America, 1492 ; of the sea route to India, 1498 ; Luther nailed up his theses at Wittenberg, 1517.



All the same it is not a pleasing reflection that missionary work, apart from sporadic efforts around colonies such as those among North American Indians or West Africans, was left to the Roman Catholics for centuries after the Reformation. The Roman Church had done little missionary work for some three centuries before the Reformation, but by it was stirred up to make good by religious conquests in the New World the ground which it had lost in the Old.<sup>1</sup> Even when the religious revival of the eighteenth century quickened the dormant consciences of Protestants, the idea of world-wide missions put forward in carefully reasoned fashion by William Carey<sup>2</sup> was treated as new and strange by those to whom it should have been self-evident, and opposed by some church leaders. We live in happier days, but have no cause for pride, especially over against the Roman Church, which did its missionary duty before the evangelical part of the Church was awake. We have centuries of neglect to overtake.

The different views of the Bible fall into two main classes, that of the simple Bible reader and that of the modern student familiar with historical criticism and with the comparative study of religion. To the former it should be plain that the Bible, Old Testament as well as New, is a missionary book. This has been indicated so often that it need only be referred to quite briefly. The very first chapter indicates that God made not one tribe or nation but *man*; all men are the work of His hands, made in His image, living because He has breathed on them.

<sup>1</sup> See Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions*, Chap. I.

<sup>2</sup> See *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, 1792.

After man's sinfulness has brought upon him the punishment of the Flood, God makes a covenant with Noah to preserve not Israel only but humanity from the annihilation which its sin will merit. When with the call of Abraham the story begins of the choosing of one people to play a special part, it is promised that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, and this theme, election of one people to be the source of blessing to all, recurs throughout the books of the Old Testament whether concerned with history or prophecy. It is enriched later by the promise of the coming of God's Anointed One and His Kingdom upon earth. So the Old Testament gives the promise which the New Testament fulfils in the coming of the Saviour of all the world. The Bible is through and through universalistic; the revelation given through the Jews is for all peoples.

But this is in no way changed by historical and literary criticism. To take an example, the account of creation in Gen. i, is now seen to be part of a priestly document of about 440 B.C. connected with that revival of religion which followed the return from the Exile when the nation was being developed into something like a Jewish Church, a society which worshipped God and did His will in the world. Close study of the whole priestly document reveals its missionary character. Why, for example, did priests writing in 440 B.C. begin with the history not of Israel but of men? They were teaching Israel the will and law of God, and especially how He should be worshipped. But Israel to them was as it were a specimen of the humanity which should be, leading along the road in which ultimately all peoples must

walk. So in the story of Noah and the covenant after the Flood, Noah is the ancestor not only of Israel but of mankind. The conditions attached to the covenant are human, not Jewish in their reference; murder is wrong not because the person murdered is a Jew, but because he is made in the image of God.

If there is universalism in the priestly documents, much more conspicuous is it in the prophetic. These set forth God as the moral Governor of all nations, with whose glory the whole earth shall be filled. They interpret their nation's history—and the interpretation governs the "historical" as much as the "prophetic" books—as the choosing and educating of God's own people that in them all nations may be blessed. They so uphold the unity of God and the righteousness which He demands from men that their religion could not be permanently confined to their own people.<sup>1</sup> After the Exile it became quite clear that God's people were to lighten the Gentiles, and Second Isaiah (chapters xl–lv) contains some of the finest passages now read in Church as missionary lessons. Judaism became a missionary religion. The lovely closing verses of Jonah reveal God's compassion for all human multitudes. Jewish apocalyptic foresees a time when the world's great powers will have become God's own as truly as Israel, when "Israel shall be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed them saying Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of mine hands, and Israel mine inheritance."<sup>2</sup> In the book of Daniel, in that prophecy of the coming

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., *God in the Old Testament*, by R. A. Aytoun, Chap. VII on "The Universality of God."

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xix, 24 and 25.

of the Son of Man with which our Lord Himself later was to link His appearing, the divine everlasting reign which it inaugurated was to be over no single race, but over "all the peoples, nations, and languages."<sup>1</sup> So the Jews of the Diaspora shared with the Gentiles their message of one God alone, and His moral law and judgment. They had extraordinary success in forming centres of monotheism all over the Roman Empire, and exerted a deep influence. It was of them that Seneca said that the conquered had given laws to their conquerors. Thereby they so effectively prepared the way for the Christian mission that it may be said to have continued their work.<sup>2</sup> True, there were within Judaism also those who grew more exclusive in their attitude to other nations, in reaction against the Hellenizing and Romanizing tendencies of some of their leaders; we have a conspicuous example in the Pharisees of the Gospels. But they were not in the true line of development from the prophets. In that line stood in the fulness of time Jesus, who was a prophet, but greater than all prophets.

We are still learning more of the meaning of the Old Testament, in the light of literary criticism, of the discoveries of archæology, and of the comparative study of religion. As we see more clearly the context in which it is set, its main message stands out more prominently than before. Between about 1400 B.C. (the approximate date of the Exodus) and 400 B.C. there did occur, in this one region and nation, as is now beyond question, the most remarkable religious development in the long history of the

<sup>1</sup> Daniel vii, 14.

<sup>2</sup> See Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 15.

world to that date. At the beginning of the period the one holy living God was not known in the earth; at the end He was known to the people of God, and through them was coming to be known by mankind. To the faithful who were striving to do His will it was certain that He must reign, and that His kingdom would come through all individuals being filled with His spirit. Nothing here had to be altered when Christ came to fulfil it. The main message of the Old Testament, as clarified by modern studies, is essentially missionary, the revelation of the living God. To animists, polytheists, pantheists, and to theists with imperfect conceptions of the character of God, this message is as relevant to-day as ever, and is an essential preparation of the spirit to receive the yet more startling message of the Incarnation.

### *The New Testament*

If the Old Testament is a missionary book, much more obviously is the New, not so much in any particular detail as in the whole intention, which is aimed at mankind and not at any one people. Very appropriately in this connection does Mr. Shillito recall how G. K. Chesterton on the South Downs, wishing for a piece of chalk to draw the view, remembered that the whole hill on which he sat was chalk.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament is all missions, though they are more noticeable in places as chalk is more noticeable in the cliffs of Dover.

Nevertheless there are questions here over which we must pause a moment, particularly in connection with the Gospels. The Epistles are obviously letters written in the midst of missionary activity and

<sup>1</sup> *The Way of the Witnesses*, p. 7, by E. Shillito.

need not detain us. But in the Gospels we find our Lord restricting his own operations to his own people, and saying He was sent only to them.<sup>1</sup> And in the Acts we find evidence that at first even to the early Church the admission of Gentiles was a startling idea.

These things are to us a salutary reminder that the New Testament is a continuation of the Old, that historically it was to a chosen people that God first made Himself known, and through them to all mankind. The principle "to the Jew first" underlies the whole plan, and Jesus was a real Jew, who had no thought of destroying the ancient covenant between Jehovah and His people. His message could only be given to Jews first; until the House of Israel had understood and had the chance of accepting it there was nothing intelligible to say to the Gentiles. No attempt simultaneously to preach the Kingdom in Palestine and in other countries could have been contemplated. And when we consider the short duration of Jesus' ministry we know that there was no time for preaching beyond Jewry. Alike the principle of the chosen people, and the sound missionary method of concentration of human resources, forbade any scattering of effort in those first days.

The question to examine is whether Jesus' message was inherently and inevitably universalistic, bound wherever it was first proclaimed sooner or later to burst any limitations and find its way into the broad stream of human life. There is no real contradiction between preaching first to one's own people and preaching a message relevant to all

<sup>1</sup> See Matth. xv, 21-28 ; x, 5-6.

mankind. Probably most of those who read this book, to whom the universalism of Christianity is no open question, for nine-tenths of their time are thinking of its application to their own country. Jesus, and until the Resurrection His disciples, were concerned solely with Jews, yet in a spirit opposite to the exclusiveness of some scribes and Pharisees. Their movement, like that of the Baptist who said that God was able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham, was in the prophetic succession. The deeper our understanding of what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God, still more of the conditions for entering it, the more impossible it is to find any racial or local boundary lines. Could the Lord's Prayer be read as for Jews only? As against the Pharisaic emphasis on externals, which naturally take local colour, Jesus stressed the inward and spiritual conditions of salvation, which are relevant for all humanity. Many books have been written on the meaning of the term "Son of Man," but none of them affects the extreme probability that one reason why Jesus chose it for Himself was that it identified Him with mankind; "Son of David" others might call Him, but that was not wide enough. "Salt of the earth," "Light of the world" is the type of phrase natural to Him. "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth." "The field is the world." "The Gospel must be preached in the whole world."

Jesus' tone when He talks of Samaritans is something new, and it is no accident that the Samaritan in a parable does right where priest and Levite fail, or that He finds greater faith in a Gentile soldier than among Jews, or that Nineveh and Tyre are felt to be

less in danger than His own people. As opposition from His countrymen deepens He speaks parables like the marriage feast and the vineyard, showing that the place of the Jew who rejects or abuses his privilege is to be taken by others. "They shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God." When the opposition comes to a head, He is crucified by Roman hands but at Jewish instigation; God raises Him up, and the command to the Apostles to go into all the world follows as the inevitable sequel and the final climax of the Gospel.

Whatever else may be doubtful, it is not open to question that by the time the four gospels were written or edited it was held as axiomatic that the saving mission of Jesus was to the world. That is plain enough to any simple reader of the Bible. But as in the case of the Old Testament, so in the New there have been discussions of sources and new interpretations in the present century. Scholars go behind the gospels to earlier sources embedded in them, and read those in a light unfamiliar to simple Bible readers.

This is no place, and the writer has no competence, to summarize or appraise the critical labours of scholars regarding the four gospels in the last thirty years. But we cannot escape the consideration whether these studies have caused any shifting of the biblical foundations of the missionary enterprise. We will look, by way of example, at four typical outstanding questions. 1. Is there doubt as to the authenticity of the "Missionary Commission" in Matth. xxviii, 19 and Mark xvi, 15? 2. Assuming that scholars are right in postulating an earlier document (commonly referred to as "Q") as a



source used by the Synoptics, is the teaching therein reported less universalistic? 3. If Jesus thought so much of the impending end of the world as some scholars deduce from the Gospels, is the case for missions unaffected? 4. Has the "Form Criticism" which seems to leave us with the beliefs of the first Church rather than with objective reports of Jesus' words and acts, knowing Him, as it were, at one remove, made us uncertain whether or not this enterprise is in accordance with His will?

1. What has already been said shows that the warrant for missions is not to be found in any text, but somewhat unfortunately what is called "The Great Commission," viz., Matth. xxviii, 19, cf. Mark xvi, 15 is often quoted as the one or the supreme basis for the whole enterprise. It is always possible for interpreters to throw doubt upon a single passage, and here some of them feel three difficulties—the fact that Jesus had said earlier in this Gospel (x, 5) "Go not into any way of the Gentiles"; the use of the trinitarian formula associated with later days of the Church; and the fact that the disciples actually did not commence any mission at once and were surprised when the admission to the Church even of proselytes was first proposed.

On the other hand, there is no textual ground for separating the passage from the rest of Matthew. As to Matth. x, 5, the resurrection had so changed the whole situation that the restriction on the earlier mission of the disciples could now appropriately be removed. The Apostles who heard the words may have for a time failed to grasp the significance of what was said and so failed to act upon it, as previously they had failed to grasp the repeated predic-

tions of the crucifixion and resurrection. The enlarging experience of Peter and Paul was used by the Spirit to bring to their minds as promised what Jesus had said to them. Then quite possibly there was reflected back into their narrative a three-fold form of words which had later come to express the belief of the Church, but there is no reason to doubt the main substance of the command.

The whole passage (vv. 16-20) recalls similar scenes in the last chapter of St. John, and is couched in lofty language suited to the climax of the story. Apparently at first Jesus is caught sight of at a distance and some are in doubt whether it is He, but they all become assured as He comes nearer. Speaking as one already in heaven, He tells them that full authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, in virtue of which He bids them go and make disciples of all nations, and assures them of His perpetual presence.

Absolute proof is out of the question, but there seems inadequate reason for doubting the story, particularly as no doubt is possible that the early Church believed it had received such a command, and after a few years lived to obey it. Finally it should be mentioned that scholars who deny the authenticity of the passage, such as Joh. Weiss, hold that the rightness of missions to non-Christians is far more deeply grounded in reality than it could have been through a single word of Jesus. "Missions have their authority not in the 'missionary commission' of Jesus but in the history of the first Church."<sup>1</sup>

2. It is none of our concern to examine complicated scholarly controversies of the kind "which

<sup>1</sup> Joh. Weiss, Comm., *ad loc.*

to-day are, and to-morrow are cast into the oven." But there is one result of patient labours upon the Gospels which is likely to abide, namely the certainty of earlier documents, as well as oral tradition, having been used in their preparation. Among the hypotheses for which there is much evidence, though it falls short of certainty, is that Matthew and Luke made use of a single common document no longer extant, now referred to by scholars as "Q," this being the first letter of the German word for "Source." The reconstruction of Q has naturally been a task attractive to many, and in spite of uncertainty regarding particular verses, there is a large common body of agreement as to its main contents. The interest to us here is that if we have by this means access to something written say twenty years earlier than our Gospels and used as a source by two of them, we ought to see whether Jesus and His words had at that time the same "missionary inevitability" as we have seen in the gospels generally.

We may, for example, borrow the results of B. H. Streeter's study of this subject in his *The Four Gospels* (1924). Anyone can read through the passages from St. Luke listed at the end of his chapter on "The Reconstruction of Q" (p. 291), from which the following is a representative selection. Almost at the outset we find the baptism of Jesus, with the heavenly voice "Thou art my Son; in thee I am well-pleased," iii, 22, followed by the temptation, containing the replies to the "ifs" in "If thou art the Son of God," iv, 1-16a. A large piece of what we commonly know as the Sermon on the Mount includes the reproach "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I

say," with the connected parable of the house and its foundations, vi, 46-49. Jesus heals the servant of a Roman officer in whom He finds greater faith than in Israel, vii, 9. John the Baptist's messengers bring their wistful inquiry, and receive the well-known answer ending in the words "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me," vii, 23. "Follow me," Jesus commands some unknown man, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God," ix, 59 and 60. Sending out the seventy He includes in their message, "The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," x, 9. If Tyre and Sidon had witnessed the mighty works seen by Galilean towns and villages they would have repented long ago, x, 13. "He that heareth you heareth me," x, 16. When they come back His communings aloud with His Father include the words "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father and who the Father is save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. And turning to the disciples he said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see," x, 22-23.

Later he cries that "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here," xi, 32. He rebukes the cleansing of the outside of the cup and of the platter while the inward part is full of extortion and wickedness, xi, 39. "Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God: but

he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God," xii, 8 and 9. "Be ye like unto men looking for their Lord, when he shall return from the feast . . . for in an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh," xii, 36, 40. "I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I if it be already kindled?" xii, 49.

The Kingdom grows as amazingly as mustard seed and permeates as completely as leaven, xiii, 18-21. "Ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God," xiii, 28 and 29. "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple," xiv, 27. "As it was in the days of Noah," (i.e. before any specially Jewish history) "even so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man," xvii, 26. The last section of the document tells the parable of the talents, with the parallel between the Jews who did not use their privilege and the man who hoarded his talent and had it taken from him and given to others, xix, 11-27.

These passages—and others might have been quoted—make their own impression. If Jesus had been merely a teacher for Jews, this earlier document might have been expected to show less than the Gospels of the tendency to burst the shell of Judaism. Instead, in proportion to its length it has more "missionary" passages than the gospels themselves. The Jesus here revealed is the world's Jesus.

3. Some of us remember the stir in the world of

New Testament scholarship which followed the publication of Albert Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.<sup>1</sup> According to it, Jesus lived in a thought-world utterly strange to us, dominated entirely by the expectation of a speedy end of the world. The writer read it while on missionary service and like many others thought "If this really were true, and not an over-emphasis of something of which we have until now taken too little account, is there really much case left for missions?" Would it be worth while to tell India, which has had many saints and religious teachers, of one more who made a tremendous mistake about what was to follow his activity, even though he left many lovely and true sayings about God? The question is still not without point, though its sharpness has been blunted by many studies of scholars in the intervening years which have placed Schweitzer's contribution in a truer perspective. Not so exclusively as then appeared to Schweitzer was Jesus absorbed in the thought of eschatological happenings. And if He foreshortened in time the processes of eternity, as did so many prophets before Him, this demonstrated His real humanity without invalidating His main revelation, which was not tied up to any particular programme of "the last things." But we now have the most impressive practical proof that this interpretation at its most drastic leaves untouched the basis of missions, for the author of the book is a missionary. He himself held that in the eschatological frame-work of world-negation (in which we simply cannot live) Jesus proclaimed the ethic of active love which is relevant in every age, with such

<sup>1</sup> English 1910, German *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, 1906.

authority as compels men to-day to the life of love. The final chapter of this disturbing book was written when Schweitzer had turned aside from theology to study medicine with a view to healing suffering Africans, because thereby Jesus' religion of love could be acted out in modern conditions.<sup>1</sup> The world has heard the story of what followed, "On the edge of the primeval forest." The Lambarene medical mission is the best comment on those words at the end of the book, which vibrated with something not felt in the necessarily technical earlier discussions. "As one unknown and nameless He comes to us, just as on the shore of the lake He approached those men who knew not who He was. His words are the same: 'Follow thou Me!' and He puts us to the tasks which He has to carry out in our age. He commands. And to those who obey, be they wise or simple, He will reveal Himself through all that they are privileged to experience in His fellowship of peace and activity, of struggle and suffering, till they come to know, as an inexpressible secret, who He is." The Master who can thus command, and be simply obeyed at such cost, is all men's Master, whatever be their view of the world and its ending.

4. But another difficulty raises its head, again in its more extreme forms in Germany. It has become clearer than formerly that what we have in the Gospels is not ordinary history or biography, but collections of stories told for preaching purposes in the early Church. It is as true of the first three Gospels as of the Fourth that "these things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God,

<sup>1</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *My Life and Thought*, Chapter IX.

and that believing ye may have life in his name."<sup>1</sup> Earlier and later strata of sayings or stories are discerned by means of the form in which they have been preserved. Admixture of miraculous or supposedly edifying material is believed to be traceable. Words like "legendary" and "mythical," certainly with a carefully defined technical significance which does not deny fundamental historicity, are freely used about items in gospel narratives. A rigorous critical analysis of the synoptic gospels digs down to the oldest layer of material, which must have come from the tradition of the earliest Christian group which lived in Palestine and spoke Aramaic. The net result, according to one of the foremost scholars in this field, is that we know very little of the life and personality of Jesus, though we know enough of His *message* to make for ourselves a consistent picture.<sup>2</sup>

These few sentences cannot be an adequate characterization of a discussion which is still going forward, in which competent scholars may be left to sift out the truth. Our sole concern is with any possible weakening of the basis in the gospels for the universalism of Christianity, and we deliberately state the difficulty in its most acute form. To be free of prejudice we should remind ourselves that some of the scholars associated with "Form-criticism," by their courage in the situation arising out of the totalitarian claims of the State, have demonstrated convincingly that their studies leave them with a lord to whom the costliest loyalty is due. When we examine what remains after this kind of

<sup>1</sup> John xx, 31.

<sup>2</sup> D. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 1935.



study, we find a bigger body of material as to which there is practical certainty, and a clearer account of Jesus and His message, than we were at first led to expect. In this residuum after various sieves have been at work Jesus is still one who ought to be proclaimed to the whole world. It is not possible to set this out clearly as we could in the case of Q, until these studies are more advanced, and their results more generally accepted. But meanwhile we have a useful example of drastic application of "form-criticism" in *Jesus and the Word*, by R. D. Bultmann (1935). In its exposition of the teaching regarding the Kingdom, and man's obedience to God who is alike the Remote and the Near, this statement reveals a Jesus who calls men of this and every age to repent, be forgiven, and do the will of God, whose Kingdom is ever at hand. At one important point, it helps us through a difficulty which Schweitzer's emphasis had left. Schweitzer feels that we must accept the ethic of Jesus but reject His eschatology. Bultmann sees that Jesus' ethic is bound up with His eschatology, both being based upon the confronting of man with the sovereignty of God, and both equally bringing to men the word of God. Whatever mistake there may be in predicting the end of the world at some given date, the confronting of man with God's sovereignty which is the essence alike of the ethic and of the eschatology was right then and is right now.<sup>1</sup> Jesus sees man as standing here and now under the necessity of decision, because he is face to face with the coming of the Kingdom of God. That belongs to the future, as do death and the future life. But if the certainty of

<sup>1</sup> See translators' preface to *Jesus and the Word*, p. viii.

those is for the wise man a factor determining his present, much more the certainty of the coming Reign of God forces upon him the decision here and now to obey God's will. So Bultmann joins Karl Barth in teaching a theology of crisis, setting men before life's inescapable "Either-or," and his Jesus is the bearer of the word which assures repenting man of the forgiveness of God. At the end of a book filled with inferences which to most of us seem distressingly negative, stands this sentence: "Whether His word is truth, whether He is sent from God—that is the decision to which the hearer is constrained, and the word of Jesus remains: "Blessed is he who finds no cause of offence in me."<sup>1</sup> Is that after all different from the missionary's message?

If such is the case with Form-criticism at its most negative, more positive presentations show results of striking relevance to our present enquiry. M. Dibelius' *From Tradition to Gospel* (1934) penetrates to the form in which tradition started, and finds that its most weighty elements had become fixed in the first twenty years after Jesus' death, with eye-witnesses still living. Still more important, it was the missionary purpose which drove early disciples to the formulation and propagation of the whole tradition. "Missionary purpose was the cause and preaching was the means of spreading abroad that which the disciples of Jesus possessed as recollections" (p. 13). No-one was concerned to produce historical records for a distant future, for the end of the world was expected soon, but there were multitudes to be told of the salvation brought by this Jesus, and

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus and the Word*, p. 219.

recollections to be passed on full of emotional power to bring about repentance and to gain believers. There could be no question of a kind of neutral official report on the precise historical details: the early disciples spoke in the manner, and only in the manner, of the oldest elements in the Synoptic Gospel material, telling what they had seen and heard that others might share their experience of Jesus. "What founded Christianity was not knowledge about a historical process, but the confidence that the content of the story was salvation" (p. 295).

In other words, we get back into touch with the religious experience of those who had been in touch with Jesus Himself. Thereby surely we get more of the real truth and meaning of Him than we could have received from, say, a committee of Roman historians who investigated and reported with conscientious neutrality. For the greatest fact to report was the saving significance of personal contact with Jesus, which only those who had experienced it could understand and pass on.

Without the missionary purpose of the early Church we should not have had our gospels. The further back we penetrate, the more we meet the first Christian religion as propaganda—this religion never was without being missionary. But the most vital fact is that the further back we are taken by any processes of study, the more clear it becomes that our Jesus has not changed, nor His total message and demand on life. From the start He so impressed Himself upon His pupils and friends that they could only speak of Him out of their own glowing experience as all men's Saviour and Lord.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the general subject of Form Criticism see also V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, 1933.

We have not referred, as it is probably not now necessary, to the possible doubts stirred up at an earlier date by scholars of the extreme "liberal" school. As to all such doubts it may suffice to end this survey with a word from the most famous of the "liberal" scholars, Adolf Harnack, spoken in a lecture in Berlin as long ago as 1896. He told how the simple Bible-reader is accustomed to regard all that he reads in the Gospels as time-less or super-temporal. "He only sees and feels what he holds to be the real kernel of the narrative, that which appeals to himself, and which accords with Christian doctrine which was fixed by the Church." Historical study on the other hand has many other things to consider, which Harnack surveyed in his own masterly fashion, not forgetting the fifth unwritten gospel, the joint testimony of the early Church. Thereafter he continued "The simple Bible reader must only continue to read the gospels as he has read them hitherto; for ultimately even the critic cannot read them otherwise. What the one holds to be the real kernel and significance must be recognized as such by the other."<sup>1</sup>

Modern Biblical studies have in no way weakened the scriptural basis for missions.

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Harnack, *Reden und Aufsätze, Zweiter Band*, p. 18.

### CHAPTER III

## THE MISSIONARY MOTIVE AND ATTITUDE

THE missionary enterprise is not, as is often represented, based upon any estimate of the condition of the non-Christian world. It is often said that our fathers who supported the earlier Protestant missions were concerned about the terrors of hell fire awaiting the heathen, that they calculated how many souls went to damnation during so many ticks of the clock, and that the strength of their imagination of this horror was the measure of their missionary zeal. It is not true of the founders of the enterprise. To take three outstanding examples, there is amazingly little of that type of argument in the papers dealing with the formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (1715), or in William Carey's *Inquiry* (1791), or in the first *Proceedings of the London Missionary Society* (1794). What inspired those first costly efforts was something calmer and more solid than any supposed condition now or hereafter of the non-Christian world, regarding which the available information was known to be inadequate.

That the heathen were "perishing" was indeed to the missionary founders a burden on the heart, as it was to the Apostle Paul and should be to us. The precise meaning attached to the term "perishing" may have been modified, not abolished, by the

changes of thought between that day and this. In courtesy to non-Christian peoples we may use other speech which they are less liable to misunderstand. But if we hold that knowledge of Christ is knowledge of God, and life everlasting, the term is not without its meaning for our own day. Of those Christians who have had the most appreciative contact with modern non-Christians many have also an acute sense of what their friends are missing, of the atrophy of certain spiritual organs in a life otherwise lovely and fascinating, in other words, of something "perishing."

Nevertheless even this legitimate feeling is secondary, not the prime moving force of the Christian mission. That has always been an experience of Jesus, finding God in Him, and thereby finding redemption from the world of evil. It began with men and women around Jesus having such things happen to them that, fanatical monotheists as they were, they could only call Him "Lord." "Jesus is Lord" was the Church's first confession, which could only be made in the Spirit. The cry of the first Christians, preserved in Aramaic which shows that it came from Jewish Christian circles, was "Come, Lord." Our brief glance at "Form-criticism" has shown us that the Church was born and the first records circulated because of the necessity for communicating the Apostles' discovery to others, in such a fashion that it became *their* discovery too, as they in turn came under the same domination, thereby doing, as they well knew, the will of God. In other words, the *primary* aim and motive of the Christian mission is the sharing with all humanity of the personally experienced domination

of Jesus. That is not an "extra" to a completed Christianity; it is organic to its growing life; without it there would have been no Church and no Bible, only a little group cherishing some pathetic recollections which gradually faded out. All kinds of secondary impulses have played their part, and the missionary appeal in the modern Church is a harmony of many notes. But to-day as much as in those first days in Jerusalem, it rests primarily on the fact that those who have found Jesus to be verily their lord know that they have found something which they must share with everyone else whom they can reach.<sup>1</sup>

That is why it is always hopeless to try to prove the necessity of missions to those who have no personal experience of Christ, whether they be nominal Christians at home or friendly non-Christians abroad. They can see the usefulness of the by-products in education or medicine or social reform, but cannot see why these should not be imparted without the disturbing accompaniment of religious change. But any man who by trust in Jesus has been lifted out of moral failure to purity and power, or standing by the open grave of a friend has found by the same faith victory over death, knows that this has not happened because he is educated, or belongs to any one race or social class. The Master who could do these things for him could do them for any human being, and only God could really do them. The change in him has occurred at

<sup>1</sup> Compare the opening words of the letter of Mr. Bogue of Gosport in 1794 which led to the formation of the London Missionary Society: "God has favoured us with the knowledge of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. Our obligations to Him on this account are inexpressible; and, I trust, we are often prompted from the fulness of our hearts to ask 'What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits?'"

those levels of life which are deeper than any superficial dividing barriers. Race, education, class or social standing erect partitions between man and man which seem firmly planted; but sin, grief and death are common to all that breathe, and the lord who can divinely heal these must be common to humanity. With such experience behind him a man needs no elaborate argument about missions to the heathen, which means people such as he used to be, wherever and whoever they may be. Nor is this experience anything subjective, peculiar, out of touch with history or with the church universal. Rather he has repeated in his own modern way the intuitive discovery of St. Paul and of all believers, that here even such wide gulfs as those between caste or race or religion are bridged, and "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him."<sup>1</sup>

There has been no real change in missionary motive between the first century and the twentieth: its driving force is a distinctive religious experience which is essentially the same, though new to each believer. Reflection upon that experience produces Christian theology. Action upon it produces the expanding church, and the process of expansion is called "missions" when it goes beyond the country of its origin. Missions and theology are branches of the same tree, whose root is personal religion. One of the immediate certainties of the believing mind regarding Christ is that He is the personal manifestation of God in human form. Another, equally spontaneous, is that He is for all men.

<sup>1</sup> Romans x, 12.



There is thus a closer inter-relation than is commonly realized between the Christian mission and Christian theology. Originating in the same religious experience, they are likely to flourish or fail together; weakening in theology is likely to be accompanied by weakening in missionary effort. The Church which is most sure of its own faith is best fitted to propagate it in the world. And gradually the converse of this is coming to light, namely the reflex action of missions upon the faith and the theology of the Church. Missions may from one point of view be regarded as a gigantic experiment to disprove or verify the classical doctrine of the divine-human person and the work of Christ. For a century and a half—to speak of Protestant missions alone—the experiment has been tried of bringing the news of one particular Saviour to men and women of amazingly different types—primitive savages, Indian outcastes and Brahmans, Japanese nobles, Chinese coolies and scholars, villagers and town-dwellers, rich and poor; and a vast host of reactions is available for study. If two things stand out as they do in those reactions, first the strange way in which each type finds Jesus as its kin, so that nowhere is He a foreigner, and second the way each type finds in Him the remedy for its own special needs as well as for those common to mankind, this powerfully confirms the Church's sense of His significance as Son of Man and Son of God, and tends towards bolder statement of His divinity and His saving efficacy.

In a world so needy as ours, there is room for every type of missionary effort, but the classical type is allied with the classical theology of the divine

incarnation and lordship of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all men. It was no accident that Pauline doctrine and Pauline missionary effort went together.

There are, of course, other missionary motives, resulting in different emphases in what is done. There are those like Schweitzer who feel that having been favoured by being set in places of culture and comfort, whereas the coloured races are burdened with preventible suffering and ignorance, they must share their goods with the less favoured, or make reparation for wrongs inflicted. There are others who view missions as a process, becoming increasingly conscious, of cross-fertilization of cultures between East and West.<sup>1</sup> There are some whose chief thought is of social maladies to be cured, of primitive darkness to be dispelled, of the brotherhood of man to be put into operation. Young men and women not very sure of their own creed who have found deep satisfaction in settlement work among the poor in western cities go to offer the same neighbourly friendship to people in cities of the East. One missionary leader of recent times after a change of theological standpoint found still sufficient motive for missions in the leadership as distinct from the lordship of Christ.<sup>2</sup> And it will be generally agreed that the youth of the world to-day awaits most of all one who will lead it, as a heavenlier and purer Führer or Duce, into the transformed world for which humanity is longing. Unitarians find their own ways of spreading ethical monotheism, especially in India by religious co-operation with the Brahmo-Samaj.

<sup>1</sup> See *Christian Missions and a New World-Culture*, by A. G. Baker, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> See *Jesus, Lord or Leader*, by F. Lenwood, 1930.

It would be wrong to frown on any sincere missionary effort because it was based on a faulty creed. St. Paul when in prison in Rome went further and even dispensed with the demand for sincerity as he rejoiced that at any rate the name of Christ was made known. There is room in the modern world for every agency (provided it does not waste its energies in destroying the work of other agencies) which either proclaims the name of Jesus or silently diffuses His spirit. But when all this has been heartily acknowledged two things remain true. First, it is the call of the divine-human Jesus which makes most missionaries. Any extensive study of those moving documents in which young people, offering their services to missionary societies, try to indicate what has led them to make the offer, reveals that the normal dominating consideration is the sense of compulsion to share with all men that which they have found in the living Christ. And second, the strongest missions and the most truly indigenous Christian communities which have grown up in many parts of the world have been spiritually nourished on the normal teaching of the Church regarding Jesus not only as the human Friend but as the divine incarnate Redeemer.

This is due to a superior driving force which though often unnoticed is clear enough when mentioned. The man who believes that God wills this undertaking is likely to be more persistent and powerful than the man who thinks this is a good thing to do, or volunteers to help his distant fellow-men, or seeks to spread the light of truth and culture. We are always liable to wonder whether we have not been presumptuous or deceived by our race-pre-

possessions in supposing that we have anything to impart, or that truth needs any assistance from us. We rightly dread the assumption of superiority, the failure of a sense of humour and proportion, the sentimentality regarding other races which begets a pity fiercely resented. Such dread can paralyse missionary effort based merely on philanthropy. But the believer in the Christian revelation is delivered from the danger alike of superiority and of sentimentalism by the simple fact that the initiative in the whole matter is not his but God's, who by His mighty acts prepared the way for Christ and then sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. The missionary merely has news to communicate, and the question whether he himself belongs to a higher or a lower civilization or even is ethically above or below his hearers is, strictly speaking, irrelevant. He is not there to spread his own culture or ideals, but to communicate revealed facts. He can be perfectly free of that sentimentality about "the poor heathen" beloved by the caricaturists, and of that unconscious arrogance of which missionaries are often accused by people in the Orient. What is practically more important is that he can also be free of timidity in approaching those cultured modern men and women often met in eastern countries who are obviously in no need of "uplift" or relief or intellectual enlightenment, and who, as he well knows, are in some respects his superiors. There are among them poets, scientists, even saints. Who is he to offer them suggestions for their spiritual improvement? But if they do not know the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ he has something to bring even to them, and can bring it with as little personal pride as

the postman who delivers a letter. The missionary did not make the news and claims no credit for it; he only happens to have been given the task of delivering it.

All the same, the actual task is not so simple as delivering a letter. Much depends in this case on the attitude of the missionary postman. It is dangerously easy for him to mingle confidence in himself with confidence in his function. Hence the reiteration in books for missionaries of the need for humility, penitence and love. "Humility, because it is not our own message which we bring but God's, and if in our delivery of it self-assertion finds any place we shall spoil that message and hinder its acceptance: penitence, because our fathers and we ourselves have been so blind to many of the implications of our faith; love, because our message is the Gospel of the love of God, and only by love in our own hearts for those to whom we speak can we make known its power or true nature."<sup>1</sup> It is well known in missions that there are more failures due to faulty attitude than even to faulty use of a vernacular. Crusader-complex is fatal, as is also the inadaptability in small matters which assumes that familiar old western ways are alone right. In the country to which we go, at first as guests, we are to embody the spirit of loving courtesy and appreciation, and as we grow in understanding, to identify ourselves as far as we rightly can with all its interests.

This applies not only among people of advanced culture; it has special force among those more primitive. The New Guinea missionary who has learnt to be proud of his naked savages with their

<sup>1</sup> *I.M.C. Jerusalem Report*, Vol. I, p. 486.

grease-paint and dirt, and who is wounded by anything done contrary to their welfare, is the most likely to find an entrance for the message which to them must at first be difficult. Interest in people as themselves and not merely as possible converts; sympathetic understanding of their social customs, ethics and religion; the penetrating intuition of what it feels like to be in their position—these things are as necessary as learning to talk their language, and in a deeper sense are part of that process.

The worst possible mistake is to assume that some kind of a competition between Christianity and other systems is going forward and that an admission of points to the credit of the others is a weakening of the case for Christianity. Such weakening could only come from a lack of generosity on the Christian side, which perforce sets up a defence-mechanism on the other. The very idea of a competition contradicts the conception already mentioned of bringing news of that which God has done. On ordinary paedagogic principles the missionary's aim must be to find some ground common to himself and his hearers, the known from which to start for the unknown. On deeper Christian principles, the bearers of a message concerning the divine love which understands all misrepresent it if they themselves fail either in understanding or in love.

Two studies may greatly help the missionary to take up a right attitude, namely anthropology and the study of religions, and regarding each he has his own point of view.

It is unfortunate that anthropologists so frequently criticize missionaries collectively as to create an unnecessary feeling of tension between the two.

The missionary founders knew nothing of anthropology, but neither did explorers nor early administrators. When the new Study of Man emerged, much of its material was supplied by missionaries; not a few of them to-day are competent anthropologists, and the missionary societies generally have encouraged the study. Yet the dreadful disintegration of native life and customs at many places of contact with white civilization is all laid to the charge of missionaries ignorant of anthropology, whereas it is patently due to the overwhelming pressure of the materialistic side of western civilization, and often to the sheer greed of Europeans. Nobody has known enough anthropology to deal wisely with native races. We missionaries have had our share of failure along with others, and must acknowledge it without accepting sole blame. Lack of insight into the deeper feelings and intuitions of primitive people, and of foresight of the results of social changes introduced with Christianity, have weakened the gospel message and helped to bring into being an imitative Christianity without roots in the soil and dependent upon the foreigner. We cannot escape some share of responsibility for that decay of native etiquette which has not merely substituted the drab for the picturesque, but which has removed old foundations for morality before the stronger new ones had been safely placed underneath them.

There is a special and exceedingly practical problem to be dealt with to-day in some areas where a primitive race was christianized three or four generations ago. Young missionaries, disappointed in the character-product of work done over so long a period, and introducing reasonable reforms into

institutions under their control, may be met with stubborn opposition from natives who have the real leadership of their people in their hands. They find themselves in the cruel dilemma of either incurring violent hostility as they enforce reforms, which become futile because enforced, or of lowering their moral standards and accepting sub-Christian practices in the Church. Only by the divine Spirit's guidance is a solution in each particular instance to be found. But it is clear that the christianizing process of the past generations has missed certain levels of the native personality which might have been discovered and "baptized into Christ" if the insight of earlier teachers had been sharpened by the general study of Man. Such sharpened insight will now help in the practical solution of the difficulty, along the line of discovering how slow must be the rate of progress in order to carry with it the sympathy of native leaders, the missionary's function being not to enforce the right, but to assist such leaders to discover it for themselves and act upon it.

Even where there is no sad story of the past, one who loves all men and seeks the recovery of the divine image in which they were made has a stronger motive for studying anthropology than the pure scientist. He has deeper grounds for reverence for the soul, its past beliefs and its religious aspirations, and like the doctor with a passion for healing, he has a more compelling reason for mastering his scientific equipment. Here he parts company with those anthropologists—fortunately the minority—who so idealize all native customs as to object to every kind of change, preferring the preservation of interesting living pieces in a museum. Some customs interesting



to the pure scientist are appalling in their consequences for the native, and the sooner they are changed the better, though the change must be wrought with the gentleness of the skilled operator, not with the murderous hacking of ignorance. Anthropology provides a valuable meeting ground for administrators, educators, and missionaries, who never ought to work in water-tight compartments. The pure scientific approach to native custom, ethics and religion needs to be warmed and inspired by the missionary's keenness to seek and save. That same keenness will lead the missionary astray unless combined with a thorough knowledge of his subject and with the impartial love of truth. Science and fervour go best in harness.<sup>1</sup>

If the study of Man thus concerns the missionary, the study of man's religions concerns him yet more intimately. The animism of the primitive races, now treated by philosophers with a new respect; the higher and the lower manifestations of religion in the East—Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Taoism, Shintoism, Confucianism—the almost endless ways in which man has sought God witness alike to the need for the Christian salvation and to that God who has not forsaken any race. If Nathan Söderblom on his deathbed could say "There is a living God, I can prove it by the history of religions", the study of that history is relevant and vital for missionaries. There is the obvious paedagogic need to know the mind of those whom we set out to teach about God in Christ. There is the further fact that Christianity is after all one of the great religions, and is most clearly seen in

<sup>1</sup> See article *I.R.M.*, April 1935, *Anthropology and Missionary Education*, by H. P. Junod, specially dealing with Africa.

that setting, by the features which it has in common with others and those in which it stands alone. As the Bible has revealed its uniqueness more clearly since the application to it of the literary and historical methods used in the study of ordinary books, so is it when the Christian religion is studied along with, and by the same methods as, the other world-religions. The Christian answers to the fundamental questions on life and death are best seen alongside of the answers given by the other world religions. The universal religious life of mankind is the context in which Christian affirmations reveal their fullest meaning. The general revelation of God, partial and many-sided, which has given rise to multitudinous forms of religion on the earth, is the best preface to the special revelation in history of which Jesus Christ is the centre. The Word whose light shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not, is still the true preface to the Word that became Flesh and dwelt among us.<sup>1</sup>

As in anthropology, so in comparative religion the missionary differs from the pure scientist to whom all religions are alike and equally interesting, which means equally unreal. The believer in Christ has criteria by which to estimate high and low, and a love for his fellow-man which desires for him the best. He would cease to be a missionary if he became absorbed in the mere fascination of human religious feeling. But his very desire to impart the best gives him the stronger motive for study which we have already seen in the case of anthropology, and his religious fervour opens the hearts of the fervent in other religions, for men of God understand each other even when they differ about Him.

<sup>1</sup> John i, 1-14.

Given equal intellectual equipment the missionary ought to be a better student of the history of religion than the pure scientist, simply because he cannot profess neutrality. Neutrality is a strange qualification if it means that no distinction may be made between the blind burrowings of mole-like souls which some religious practices represent, and the flashes of inspiration which here and there authenticate themselves as divine messages.

Again we may touch upon a problem which is acute for many a missionary in the present era of national sensitiveness. Much as he desires to avoid criticism, in the course of his presentation of the need for the Christian Gospel he cannot always and entirely eliminate allusions to current undesirable religious customs. To his surprise he finds not only non-Christian but Christian "Nationals" bitterly resentful. In part the resentment is the natural objection felt by every family to criticism, even when true and justified, of one of its members by an outsider. But at least sometimes and in part, it is due to the sense that the criticizer has imperfectly grasped the real meaning of the custom in question. Deep understanding and delicate sympathy alone give the right to criticize, speaking the truth in love, and this right has in some rare and notable instances been accorded, but only to those whose fellow-feeling was known to be so strong that they could criticize as it were from within. The study of religions which will help the missionary is not that which classifies species in glass cases, but that which feels the heart-beat of people groping after God, and perceives just how the Christian Gospel can turn their groping into finding.

## CHAPTER IV

### REVELATION, GENERAL AND SPECIAL

THE missionary's attitude to other religions does not depend only upon the question whether he is courteous in his approach, or even whether he has the humility, penitence and love already mentioned.<sup>1</sup> He may have these qualities in his spirit, but if he believes that the religious ideas which are precious to those with whom he speaks are of the devil, he will inevitably sooner or later find doors bolted against him. At the opposite extreme, if he is so charmed by what he encounters as to leave the impression that he has nothing fresh to impart, he has no reason for continuing to be a missionary. We only get the right approach to non-Christian religions in the measure in which we attain a right conception of revelation.

This means, to begin with, a true apprehension of what we have already called 'general revelation.' The increased knowledge of man and his religions which has come to us through more than one modern branch of study, makes the whole story of the world's religious life more impressive and fascinating. It has become increasingly impossible to attribute it all to hallucinations, dreams, priestcraft, or any of the other causes assigned by those who disbelieve the fundamental truth of religion. Missionaries would

<sup>1</sup> See p. 58.

be out of place in such company, and must beware of explaining other religions in ways which they have resented when applied to Christianity. (Some bad arguments against "heathenism" are essentially the same as those formerly used against Christianity by such opponents as Robert Blatchford.)

It is an astounding fact that the further the study of anthropology advances, the stronger is the evidence that man has always been a religious being, that alike at the crudest and the most advanced stages of culture he has tried to make terms with the supernatural. This is so ordinary a human characteristic that if explorers were now to report that they had found some tribe without anything which could be called religion their report would sound as probable as that they had found a tribe of people with only one ear or one leg. That which man never leaves behind, but which rather keeps pace with his progress in culture, is not likely to be a mirage, any more than the science of number which began crudely but has led to the higher mathematics.

Most missionaries at some point or other have sensed the earnestness and reality, sometimes the true nobility, of aspirations after God which cannot be traced to contact with Christians. They have sometimes felt a kinship with the devout of other faiths which they cannot feel with the irreligious among their own countrymen. Moreover, the New Testament is not without positive instruction on this point. No Apostle was more certain of the uniqueness of Christ than St. Paul, but he held that in the kindly order of nature all peoples had some witness of God,<sup>1</sup> and that by divine appointment all

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv, 17.

nations were seeking God, "if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us."<sup>1</sup> The agency at the root of all this imperfect religious life was not diabolic nor merely human, but divine. This is clear in spite of his uncompromising declaration of the confusion and depravity which has accompanied idol worship,<sup>2</sup> and of his announcement that the "times of ignorance" are now over, and a new situation has been created by the coming of Christ, through whom God will judge the world.<sup>3</sup>

It will greatly ease the missionary situation, and lift a burden from not a few consciences, if it is firmly established that it is *our* God who is dimly perceived by the fetish-worshipper, *our* God who hears prayers on the trembling lips of the non-Christian fatherless and widow, *our* God who receives psalms of faith addressed in ignorant sincerity to different beings. This is the real meaning of Malachi i, 11 in the (correct) Revised rendering, "My name *is* great among the Gentiles." We are bringing the clear glass to replace the distorting transparencies through which the human mind has viewed Him, but He has been there all the time. Mankind would not have forever groped after Him unless first endowed with a sense that He was there to be found.

In other words, general revelation is a reality. There is no knowledge of God which has not come from His Spirit; for not only is man unable by searching to find out God, without God he would not follow this ceaseless quest. And as in music or

<sup>1</sup> Acts, xvii 27.

<sup>2</sup> Romans i, 18-32.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xvii, 30, 31.

in art, men search and search but only by the flash of inspiration does some new and better thing emerge, so in religion, search alone, though necessary, is vain until there comes the great moment of revelation.

Such moments have come—think for instance of Socrates—outside as well as inside Christendom, and have enriched humanity with real though partial truth. Through intellect, conscience, and the sense of the infinite, those “portals of revelation” as Söderblom called them, communications have reached humanity which bear a divine signature. We must beware of the failure to honour that signature because it appears on unexpected documents. Goodness and unworldly piety are His wherever they come to light, in primitive animists or Hindus: selflessness and righteousness of life are from above, though manifested by Buddhists or Confucians.

But this truth does not lessen the need for “special revelation,” or abolish the differences between the religions. One striking difference is seen in the relationship between religion and ordinary human culture. It was to be expected that these two would keep step with each other, low culture being accompanied by low forms of religion, and higher culture lifting religion to a higher level. If both come from the human spirit, its advance should naturally manifest itself in both alike. Over the greater part of the world that is what has happened. It is now possible to map out roughly what might be called the normal route of progress in religion as culture advances.

It begins with dim conceptions of powers in nature such as animals of strange appearance, human remains, blood, which awaken uncanny

feelings. But since these soon come to be associated in the primitive mind with spirits, the stage of animism is quickly reached. As tribes and races settle in fixed abodes, they may develop common conceptions and loyalties which ultimately lift them to the worship of gods with whom they believe they have some special association. Polytheism represents a collective step upward, being associated with social and political development. Each god having some definite sphere and limited function,<sup>1</sup> the complex requirements of human life made a demand for many gods. But again, with the growth of great states under one monarch there came the natural tendency to think of the state of the gods as also a monarchy, with some god such as Zeus or Jupiter controlling the rest. Powerful nations naturally acclaimed their own national deity as supreme over all, and made it an offence to worship the others.

Here we might have expected that the next step would be to say that one god alone was real, in other words to proceed from monolatry to monotheism. That however has never occurred. The vague thought of one Supreme far above all lesser beings has always haunted the human mind, and there have been individuals, of whom one will be mentioned presently, for whom it became much more than a fleeting conception. Nevertheless with the exception of Israel and her successors, Christianity and Islam, and those whom they influenced, no people has been able to climb from polytheism through monolatry to monotheism. Instead, as men have grown in the powers of thought and abstract speculation

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., 1 Kings xx, 23.



the reality of the gods, including the supreme amongst them, has begun to fade. Where rationalistic thought has not resulted in scepticism the mind has moved towards pantheism, and thence straight to a denial of the reality of the world and of the possibility of knowledge of reality altogether.

Later Greek religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions generally, all follow this route. In Greece the gods were at first very personal and real, and to offend them had terrible consequences—think of any of the tragedies of Euripides or Sophocles. Later there were sophists of whom some were pure sceptics, and the very word “sceptic” comes to us from them. There were others who considered themselves believers, to whom the gods were useful figures of speech more than personal realities. When for instance they spoke of Athene springing from the head of Zeus they really meant only that wisdom springs from the mind of God. The neo-Platonists are concerned not with the gods, but with the One, the Divine, pure Being, the Intellectual Principle (Nous). The same kind of usage is common in the later Latin classical writers. As real individuals the gods gradually ceased to exist, long before people ceased using their names.

Hinduism, with its offshoot Buddhism, shows the same process still more clearly; in living Hinduism all its stages, lower and higher, can be seen to-day. Amongst cultured Hindus not a few of the gods already are more metaphors than personal realities, and an all-pervading pantheism has affected even the stories of their doings. At any moment they are liable to vanish and disclose the hitherto hidden fact that they were temporary disguises of the one un-

knowable ultimate reality. They were never quite real. This has happened in spite of the immense use of images, which might have been expected to solidify and perpetuate the individual characteristics of each god.

As to Chinese religions, the associations of the term "Tien" (Heaven) are now completely impersonal, yet its written character, a figure of a little man, shows that the first thought of God was anthropomorphic. It has become depersonalized with advancing culture. The gods of polytheism cannot breathe the higher air, and when they have faded out culture commits suicide in the philosophical conclusion that labour is vain and culture itself without meaning, because the ultimate Reality is unknowable. That seems inevitably to happen unless culture is dominated by a strong and vital religious faith.<sup>1</sup> It is not suggested that the whole route here outlined is always followed without deviations or even retrogressions, but there is enough evidence to show that this is the ordinary path of religions as they are influenced by advancing culture.

There is however a conspicuous exception in the case of the Jews. Their religious development was high when their cultural development was relatively low. In Moses' time, for example, their civilization was immeasurably lower than that of the Egyptians. Think of the artistic work of goldsmiths on Tut-ankh-Amen's tomb, and compare it with anything of which the nomadic Israelites were capable. Yet the religion of the Israelites was as superior to that of the Egyptians as their culture was inferior. This is not the less true because one

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Revelation*, p. 20, N. Soderblom 1933.

Egyptian king of the period instituted a religious reform looking in the direction of monotheism. Amen-hotep IV (Ikhnatōn), the predecessor of Tutankh-Amen (1360) developed a monotheistic cult of Atōn the sun-disk with repeated emphasis on "Truth." Yet the reform failed to take root, and Egypt relapsed into its ordinary polytheism. At the very same time its fugitive serfs the Israelites, whose natural tendency to polytheism is evidenced by scores of passages scattered throughout the Old Testament, were taking alone in the world, under the guidance of Moses, who bore an Egyptian name and knew the Egyptian religion, the step upward from polytheism.

Their conception of Jahweh was crude and limited but they knew He had delivered them. They quickly learnt one truth which had in it the seed of all future developments, that Jahweh was one who could not tolerate companions or rivals, a jealous God, who alone must be worshipped. He was the God of Israel, but also the God of nature and the ruler of the whole earth. Whether this last lesson was already included in Mosaism, as some scholars hold,<sup>1</sup> or was learnt later through Amos and his successors matters little to our present argument. Here is a people which out of its own national experience of deliverance discovered the existence of one living God and His moral demand. All later Jewish history, in the interpretation of it given by the prophets, is a further unfolding of the will of this living God, first to Israel but through Israel to the world.

If the contrast between Egypt and Israel in the

<sup>1</sup> See for example, E. Sellin, *Neue Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift*, 1925.

time of Moses was great, even more striking was the contrast at the time of the Exile between Babylon and the Jews now captive within it. Babylon's ancient history, its stupendous buildings, its pictures and inscriptions were enough to overwhelm the poor little company of conquered Jews, who had nothing to compare with these things, even when they looked back to the glories of David's reign. Even in religion, Babylon had ancient psalms, and stories from which a priestly writer could borrow the outward form of his own narratives of the Creation and the Flood. Yet we have only to think of second Isaiah, and of the "Suffering Servant" passages therein, to realize that Israel was as far above Babylon in religion as Babylon was above Israel in culture.

About a thousand years separate Moses from "Second Isaiah," a period short in the long story of mankind, but in that period, and in that tract of country between Egypt and Babylonia, it had been revealed to the world, through that which happened to one people, that a holy living God reigns and His will must be done on earth. That revelation had yet to come to a further climax through still more amazing happenings a few centuries later, but already it stood alone in the story of the religious progress of mankind.

Mention should here be made of the Persian Zoroaster (c 600 B.C.), another inspired individual like Ikhnatōn long before in Egypt, who taught ethical monotheism, and was the founder of the present religion of the Parsees. But he met with little success, and after his death his followers included the worship of others with that of the supreme Being. Flashes of inspiration in rare persons

were not enough to communicate this sublime truth to mankind, without the experience of many continuous happenings forming a history of salvation.

As has been shown, the religious development of the Jews in no way depended upon advancement in culture, though it actually made use of cultural elements from Egypt, from Babylon, and from the countries in between. The whole process constitutes a special historical revelation, as distinct from that general revelation which is given to all and which develops concurrently with growing culture. God had made Himself known in a way which did not depend upon man's intellect, genius or talents. And when in the fulness of time, i.e. as the crown of this earlier process, Jesus lived, died, was raised to life, and imparted His Spirit to His people, God had become known through His acts in the sphere of history as He never could be known through the hints of Him in nature. Special revelation had given so much more light than general that it is not surprising that some are unwilling to concede to the latter the term "revelation" at all. But though the sun so outshines the stars that we cannot see them, they are there, and before the sun is up their light is a gift from God. Christianity must not deny general revelation; nor on the other hand must it fail to see the imperfection of the religions which have been made out of it by human limitations and sinfulness. Christianity takes up into itself this general revelation as truth distorted by man's faulty vision, which can only see aright through the glass of revelation par excellence, the communication by God of the knowledge of Himself, in the whole process of which Jesus Christ is the centre. That

process is unique, and all men must hear about it.

If to some the word "Incarnation" suggests associations which would deny this uniqueness, the similarity is only verbal. The Avatars (literally descents) of Hinduism are only inaccurately called incarnations, because they do not involve "becoming flesh" in the sense of living a truly human life with its sufferings and temptations and by that life manifesting the true nature of the divine; they are much more disguises than manifestations of deity. But God has really made Himself known in Jesus, human and divine are joined, and something has occurred which in the nature of the case cannot occur again.

The proclamation of this special revelation is the missionary's task, not general uplift nor telling people to be good, though as by-products these will have their place. There is something objective to be passed on, not our own ideas of what is beneficial. We do not set out to make a happier and better world—only God can make that—but to tell men and women how God has made Himself known. When they find themselves confronted with such a God as this, who commands and enables them to do His will, the happier life and the better world will in due time emerge.

## CHAPTER V

### CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

THE relation between general and special revelation determines in principle the relation between other religions and Christianity, but that is of such importance that the implications of what has been said must be explicitly set out. It obviously is vital to the missionary to maintain the right attitude to other faiths, including in these the various kinds of animism confronting him. It is even more important to the members of the "younger churches" who must live in close daily contact with those faiths. For the sake of clarity it may be well to indicate the attitudes most commonly adopted.

First it is alleged, especially but not exclusively by the theosophists, that all religions, with differences of form and expression, teach essentially the same thing, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This so patently disagrees with the facts presented either to the student of religions or to the practical missionary that the persistence of the statement can only be accounted for as "wishful thinking." We should all like it to be true; life would be simpler if it were; but unfortunately it just is not. To mention only one example, Buddhism does not teach the fatherhood of God.

Equally mistaken at the opposite extreme is the

assumption that other religions are simply false, which can be traced through the Church's history, connected even with great names such as Tertullian,<sup>1</sup> and which is unfortunately in the minds of some of the less-educated workers—Bible-women and catechists—employed by missions. Again this simply will not square with the facts. Those who hold this assumption have themselves to admit some great similarities between Christianity and the other systems, and have to account for them as the devil's imitation of the work of God. They have overlooked the truth of general revelation.

Between these extremes are other attitudes not so easily dismissed with a word. The American Laymen's Report entitled *Rethinking Missions*, and the Movement for World Christianity to which it has given rise, do not say that other religions have the same message or are as good as Christianity, but insist that the Christian religion must emphasize the good points in the others, and co-operate with them for human welfare. The aim of missions is "To seek with people of other lands a true knowledge and love of God, expressing in life and word what we have learned through Jesus Christ, and endeavouring to give effect to his spirit in the life of the world."<sup>2</sup> The emphasis is on co-operation, not on proclamation of a distinctive message. Co-operation is good, and the wise missionary will join hands with all who fight against vice or ignorance, intemperance or poverty. But if he is to join with them in the search for God, he may not conceal the vital fact that in a way not true of the others he has

<sup>1</sup> See "Two attitudes to pre-Christian thought" in *The Ancient Church and Modern India*, G. E. Phillips, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Rethinking Missions*, p. 59.



*found.* By the grace of God there has been a special revelation in history, which it is his whole business to impart to others. If loyalty to Christ who is the focus and the radiating centre of that special revelation involves breach with the other systems, the breach must be made; the relationship cannot be all co-operation. We may "talk up" the other systems as generously as is consistent with truth, and we may "talk down" our own present rendering of Christianity in great humility, for it is indeed unworthy; but we may not slur over the saving history which we know and the others do not. The "sharing" here is all one way, and the very word is apt to mislead. There is nothing to receive comparable in importance to what we communicate. We can hold that firmly without arrogance, because what we communicate is not ours; it is God's.

Sharply opposed to the last-mentioned attitude is that of the followers of Karl Barth. If *Rethinking Missions* does inadequate justice to the truth of special revelation, the Barthians do inadequate justice to the complementary truth of general revelation. The one side sees so much in nature that it does not see enough in grace; the other reverses the mistake. Over the whole spiritual life of man, truly say the Barthians, lies the shadow of death and guilt, but from that they deduce that revelation necessarily stands in the sharpest contrast with any thoughts of God which the mind of man has been able to form, and which are seen in the non-Christian religions. These can be all included under the comprehensive term "heathenism," which represents the attempt of man to get re-united (cf. the etymology of the word "religion") to God

by his own effort, and that after the Fall, without any humble acknowledgment of the Fall. Religions are thus all the product of man's choosing his own way rather than God's, and all alike to be condemned.<sup>1</sup> This seems to lack sympathy, as if we were to rebuke some terrified lost child looking for its mother for pride in the assumption that it can find her. Probably the child was naughty to get lost, but its present attempt to find is due not to naughtiness but to something within which it has from its mother. The note in many a non-Christian prayer is not of self-confidence but of wistful yearning for what it is intuitively felt that only divine grace can grant.

After all, the Fall did not completely destroy the divine image in man. It is true as the Barthians say that revelation cannot come out of this world, it comes into it from an entirely different dimension; that is why it is called revelation, because man could never have himself found it out. But it would be unintelligible, and thus no revelation, if its speech were utterly foreign, if there had not come earlier from the "other dimension" something enabling mankind to understand the word when the time came for it to be spoken. That something we have called "general revelation."

The difference is clearly seen in the discussion of the scope of our Lord's saying about having come not to destroy but to fulfil. It is most dangerous, say the Barthians, to use this word in any other sense than its original one of fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. "The real service of missions is to proclaim Christ as the judgment on and the end of

<sup>1</sup> See Barth's *Romans*, English translation, pp. 240-270., also Article *The Theology of the Word and Missions* by K. Hartenstein, I.R.M., April 1931.

all religions.”<sup>1</sup> There has no doubt been careless use of the term “fulfilment,” as if everything in any religion were to come to its completion in Christ, and it is well that we should be reminded that much will find its judgment and its ending. But if there are in these religions elements representing man’s distorting vision of a light too bright for him, the divine light which always shone in the darkness though the darkness comprehended it not, such elements will truly be fulfilled when the same light shines through no distorting medium but through the Word made flesh.<sup>2</sup> “Fulfilment” and “judgment” are not in this connection as mutually exclusive terms as might appear; both happen when the old system is confronted with Jesus Christ. His fulfilling of the Law and the Prophets, God’s word to His people, brought to an end much of current Judaism, which represented what man had made of that word. The saying “Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up”<sup>3</sup> is as much His as “I came not to destroy but to fulfil.”<sup>4</sup> In the ethnic religions there is less of the clear divine word and more of the confusing interpretations of man; consequently there must needs be more judgment and less fulfilment. But the Bible does not warrant us in assuming that the heavenly Father planted nothing outside the sphere of the Jewish-Christian revelation. The prophets, for example, spoke of God’s guidance of other nations as well as of the chosen people.<sup>5</sup> That guidance must find its fulfilment, not its destruction, when Christ comes to

<sup>1</sup> Hartenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> See P. Althaus, Article *Der Wahrheitsgehalt der Religionen und das Evangelium*, *Neue Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift*, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. xv, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Matth. v, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Amos. ix, 7, Isa. xix, 25.

them. We should err therefore if we went abroad and spoke to people as if their religions were merely the outcome of their sin.<sup>1</sup>

Here mention must be made of criticism of the title of Dr. J. N. Farquhar's well-known book *The Crown of Hinduism*, on the ground that the title suggests a completion rather than a revolutionizing of Hindu thought, as if Christ put the coping-stone on a mainly Hindu structure. That is to read into the title more than Dr. Farquhar intended, as the book itself plainly shows. Few titles succeed in accurately describing the whole contents of a book. Believing in the reality of general revelation he saw "broken lights" in Hinduism (see page 54) which are an unconscious prophecy of the perfect light to come in Christ. In some of its ancient books he saw directions pointing along a road which the writers could not tread, but at the end of that road they would have found the cross of Christ. He found some real values, which would be lost in the conditions of the modern world if not taken up by Christ and His Church in somewhat the same way as the best of Platonism was merged into Christianity. But that Farquhar realized the vital difference between the structure of the two systems let his own words testify :

<sup>1</sup> NOTE.—The above statement had been drafted before the appearance of the profounder and fuller treatment of the subject in H. Kraemer's *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World* 1938, which includes the sentence "Fulfilment, then, is not the term by which to characterize the relation of the revelation in Christ to the non-Christian religions" (p. 123). Nevertheless it does not seem necessary to change what has been said. Here and in other passages in this book we have emphasized as does Dr. Kraemer the *sui generis* character of the Christian revelation, and the break with the past involved in the acceptance of it. But for the reasons, and within the limits, above stated, we hold that there is a true use of the term fulfilment in relation also to the non-Christian religions.

"When Jesus says 'Follow me,' He means to say 'Follow me in the surrender of everything; follow me, if need be, even to the cross.' This dying to all that impedes the work of God in the soul includes for the Hindu a dying to Hinduism, which is no easy or pleasant duty. In the philosophy and theistic theology of Hinduism there are many precious truths enshrined; but, as we shall see, the ancient Hindu system, within which they appeared, effectually prevents them from leavening the people. This hard, unyielding system must fall into the ground and die, before the aspirations and the dreams of Hindu thinkers and ascetics can be set free to grow in health and strength so as to bear fruit in the lives of Hindu villagers. Hinduism must die in order to live. It must die into Christianity."

*Crown of Hinduism*, pp. 50 and 51.

That such language is used in a book with such a title happily illustrates the two sides to the question, too great to be fully discussed here, of the relation between general and special revelation. General revelation is a reality, but so is human blindness and sin. The relation of general to special revelation is therefore not the simple one of foundation to structure built upon it. There is always some break between truth as apprehended through general revelation and the truth communicated in the special revelation which centres in a unique fact, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is always a call to "metanoia," change of thinking.

The worst mistake which can be made is syncretism, mere amalgamation or mixture of elements from a number of religions. Religion if living must be an organic growth; no organism can be constructed by borrowing a limb from one source, a head from another, and a heart from a third. The history of religion is full of such mixtures; the

Christian Church at its outset had to wrestle for its life with many of them which went under the general title of Gnosticism, strange combinations of the Gospel with Greek or Syrian or Egyptian religious ideas and practices. If we wonder at the vigour with which the Church condemned the Gnostics, we probably have not realized as did the leaders of the Church that they were a greater menace than persecutors, because they weakened the Church from within, and would gradually have destroyed it. Wasting sickness within is always more serious than violent opposition without.

Numerous forms of syncretism are current to-day. Those in our own country who while professing Christianity indulge in occult practices or care about "lucky" or "unlucky" numbers are syncretists. So are we all in the measure in which we mingle with our religion incongruous elements from some other source. Our most prevalent syncretism is the unconscious mingling of Christianity with modern secularism, to which in its better aspects we give the title "humanism." Man's power exercised through modern science has so impressed us that we tend to live in a universe of which man is the centre, a universe complete in itself without God or eternity, though a place may be found in it for them as hypotheses. Christianity is theocentric, but not a little of our thinking is anthropocentric. It is a sobering and necessary reflection that our own religion is not Christianity pure, but a mingling of that with some measure of modern secularism, which weakens it as a missionary force in lands where secularism is already corroding other systems. When a secularized Christianity meets a secularized non-Christian

system, say Buddhism, the result is neither Christianity nor Buddhism, but secularism which is the operative element in both. The danger of syncretism thus begins within the missionary himself.

A conspicuous European example of syncretism is the "German Christianity," which mingles selected features from the New Testament with selected features from "Germanism" both ancient and modern. In India not a few Muhammedans have mingled idolatrous worship at tombs of saints, or sheer animistic religious practices, with their own religion which fiercely condemns idolatry. Japan and China provide many examples of syncretism between Buddhism, Taoism and Shintoism. A striking instance of an educated African forming a mixture of Christianity with the religion of his forefathers, a mixture from which all unique features in Christianity have disappeared, appeared in an article by himself entitled *The Religion of my Fathers* in the International Review of Missions for July 1930. It has special significance as an illustration of a danger which threatens the young educated "nationals" in several countries. Naturally they love their country and its heritage, and this love has in our own day been heightened by an abnormally stimulated patriotism. They see no reason for abandoning those things which as children they learned to admire, unless those things flatly contradict Christian teaching, but sometimes there may be real contradiction which is not at all obvious. So the incongruous mixture of old and new goes on, and all the time the part of it which operates most powerfully is the old, which has the strength of inherited instincts. When something has to be done, the

newly acquired principles have not so swift and automatic an influence as those which arise either from the inherited past or from the country's corporate mind. Consequently, while there appears to be little danger at present from open and avowed syncretism, there is very real danger from syncretism which is never consciously realized. The young African nationalist just mentioned is governed more by what comes from his forefathers than by the Gospel story. Some Christian Indians in the circles which move around Mr. Gandhi may be all unawares dominated by him and by the national heritage of which he is a symbol more than by Christ. The Chinese student may have no idea of it, yet to him the old humanism matters more than Christian ethics. Since those with the gift of leadership are most liable to fall into this error, it is probably the outstanding peril of the younger churches in this generation. Their life may be a mixture in which the persistence of certain old elements neutralizes the action of the new leaven.

The peril is the more subtle because syncretism can creep in under the protection of something which is right and desirable, namely indigenous expression of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Our religion is not something whose outward forms are everywhere the same, or which can be exported like the things which we send in tins, the same things in the same tins for Turkey or for Timbuctoo. It is rather like a seed which is to be sown in many different soils. The plant will be the same, but yet there will be some difference in its flowers and its fruit which it owes to the soil. Truths familiar to us will be clothed in unfamiliar

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter xiv, *The Naturalizing of Christianity*.



language, some of which at first sounds dangerous because of its present connotations, until we recall that those connotations can change in the future as the connotation of many a common word has changed in the past. There will be something new in Christian worship, fresh varieties of Christian activity, when the plant is firmly rooted in its new soil. At present it is an exotic, needing protection against cold winds that blow, hence half the troubles between Church and Mission, the Church being unhealthily dependent. Naturalization of Christianity in the soil of India, China, Africa, and all the other great lands is the supreme need of the hour, and yet its outward appearance may closely resemble that syncretism which is the supreme peril. What is the difference? Syncretism takes over unaltered and "unbaptized" that which is essentially heathen into a religion where it does not belong. True naturalization assimilates and transforms all possible good by its inherent organic life, of which Christ is the heart. Lumps of soil remain lumps of soil when carried to some place where they do not belong—in a house they become dirt. But soil assimilated by a living seed through wondrous processes produces new life and beauty. The difference between syncretism and indigenous Christianity is in the livingness of the seed; in other words all depends upon whether the spirit of the living Christ is in the corporate body of the young Church. If that is there, the right process of assimilation and of rejection will inevitably take place. If it is not there, syncretism is equally inevitable.

This survey of the dangerous country of close contact between our own and other religious systems

suggests three practical considerations, each merging into the other, regarding the avoidance of the dangers. First comes the need to achieve for ourselves a Christianity purer and less adulterated, which is a matter not only of clearer thinking but also of watchful prayer to be made more simply Christian in life and action. Next is the need for clearer insight into the application of Christianity to each great country, the special impact of the gospel of Christ upon its life in modern conditions. This calls for the combined work of the deepest Christian thinkers of many races, and fortunately not a few are engaged upon it. "The reinterpretation of Christianity to the world must be more vigorous and deep, more courageous and better organized than it has been or could be up to the present time."<sup>1</sup> Finally, this involves getting *deeper into* our own religion at the very same time that we spread it further abroad. It has always been so since the days when St. Paul in carrying the Gospel beyond Judaism entered into its true nature as none had done before him. It was no accident that the greatest missionary was the greatest interpreter of the meaning of the faith. The very challenge of contact with other faiths has always made Christianity discover itself more completely. And only, as Miss E. Underhill has reminded us, by using the whole of itself can it fulfil its mission to-day.

"Christianity will only establish its full claim to be regarded as the peculiar self-revelation of God to men, by using the whole of itself and living up to its own best lights. It must develop depth as well as width; once more rooting its charity and activity in the supernatural love of God in and

<sup>1</sup> H. Kraemer, *I.R.M.*, April 1930.

for Himself, once more fully thinking out and fearlessly expressing its philosophical foundations. It must balance expansion by inwardness and recollection, and orthodoxy by vigorous initiative. At present the contempt of the Eastern mind for our shallowness and lack of quietude on the one hand, and our cowardly failure to apply Christian ethic to public life on the other, is too often justified. The path of penitence must be the path to power."

*Essays, Catholic and Missionary*, p. 22.

## CHAPTER VI

### EVANGELISM

It is good news to men that there is not only general revelation of God which has been distorted by human limitations and sin, but special revelation by the mighty acts of God in the sphere of history, out of which has grown the Christian Church. The communication of that good news is evangelism.

There is something quite objective to be proclaimed. When St. Paul talked of the "foolishness of the thing preached"<sup>1</sup> he was not suggesting, as the English version does to some of its readers, that God chose to save the world by the remarkable method of letting some people make incompetent sermons. He was saying that something heralded or proclaimed, which at first seemed foolish, was used by God for human salvation. That something is the whole divine activity in history which centres in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, which we have called "special revelation." Since the world at large does not know it, it has to be proclaimed; the proclamation is evangelism, the communication of an objective divine message which is good news to mankind. Our business is not in the first instance making people good or improving the world, but letting the world know what God has done.

We have seen earlier how the New Testament literature may be regarded as a "deposit" of the missionary activity of the church in the first century. From it we can see the outlines of the objective

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i, 21.

message or "kerygma." Dr. Dodd<sup>1</sup> has shown us how various parts of the New Testament reflect the different emphases laid by different people or by the same people at different times upon special parts of the total message. Contrast for instance the absorption in the second coming in II Thessalonians with the interest in the historic ministry of Jesus in Mark, though both were part of the kerygma. To make things plain to some people the Christian heralds found they must use new terms, so the language of Hellenic mysticism was pressed into service, which meant that the process of re-statement and re-interpretation had begun. That process must always go on until the message is universally understood, but what has to be watched is the danger lest it drift into what St. Paul called preaching a different Gospel and another Christ. The best safeguard is the remembrance of the objectivity of our message, which concerns the facts of special revelation. "The great thinkers of the New Testament period, while they worked out bold, even daring ways of restating the original Gospel, were so possessed by its fundamental conviction that their restatements are true to its first intention. Under all variations of form, they continued to affirm that in the events out of which the Christian Church arose there was a conclusive act of God, who in them visited and redeemed His people; and that in the corporate experience of the Church itself there was revealed a new quality of life, arising out of what God had done, which in turn corroborated the value set upon the facts."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (1936)

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

Such being the meaning of evangelism, the term is not appropriately used to denote one among many departments of missionary effort. Unfortunate confusion has been caused by the apparent classification of missionary activity as of four kinds, evangelistic, educational, medical and social, as if the purpose of schools and hospitals were different from the communication of the good news. *All* departments of true missionary work, and not only the preaching, are evangelistic, though preaching by word of mouth is the most characteristic form which evangelism uses. Missions are thus not the fitting sphere of service for those who do not believe in the gospel though they can see the usefulness of schools and hospitals.

Here we may clear up some confusion which attends the use of two other terms, "propaganda" and "proselytizing," which our opponents often use to characterize what we call evangelism. Propaganda has lately acquired, through experiences during and after the war, the bad connotation of either (a) spreading false news or (b) spreading news for purely self-regarding purposes, as in commercial advertising or in trying to increase a party. But that is purely a recent and it is to be hoped a temporary development. *The Oxford English Dictionary* shows no disparaging connotation for the term. Its origin is in the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, or College for the Propagation of the Faith, established in 1622, so missions started the term. The Latin gerundive became an English noun to denote an association for the spreading abroad, propagation, primarily of the faith, but later of views or ideas; or else to denote the spreading abroad itself. It is

as right to spread abroad truth and good news as to propagate flowering plants or wholesome wheat; it is as wrong to propagate ill-will and false notions as to propagate weeds. Propaganda in itself is neither good nor bad; propaganda of love and truth and the gospel is definitely good, though we then generally call it missionary work. Missions are propagandist organizations, spreading abroad something infinitely good, the news of the mighty acts of God. Evangelism is propaganda of the Gospel, but the nature of the Gospel spread abroad determines the methods to be used in the spreading and excludes the use of those which are questionable or unworthy. Were it otherwise, missions might learn much from the astonishing efficacy of propaganda which has changed the political life of more than one European country within one or two decades. The probability is however that many of the methods used would not commend themselves to the Christian conscience.

As to proselytizing, a proselyte (*O.E.D.*) is "One who has come over from one opinion, belief, creed or party to another," i.e. a convert. In itself the term has thus no evil meaning. Proselytism means making converts. We are proselytizing when engaged in any activity which if successful would end in people being converted. True, we are not primarily even trying to convert people—that is God's business and we just speak of Him, but we hope that by God's grace true conversion may come about. In this case the term has incurred a two-fold deterioration, first from the bad and selfish things which have sometimes been done to induce people to change their religion, as in some mediaeval wholesale conversions by force of arms, or in some

incidents of the recent Suddhi<sup>1</sup> and similar movements in India; second from a careless reading of our Lord's denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew xxiii, 15, where the condemnation is not of the zeal which makes a proselyte, but of the waste of the zeal upon making the proselyte "more of a son of hell than yourselves." The term figures largely in controversies concerning missions in many non-Christian countries to-day; newspaper articles by non-Christians constantly assume that proselytism is in itself an evil, and often demand that it be restrained by law. Some evils associated with it may even need such restraint. But this only strengthens the necessity for being clear in our own minds and not being brow-beaten by misuse of terms. We are *not* doing the evil or the selfish thing of which our critics are thinking when they accuse us of proselytizing. Yet we are proselytizing in the true meaning of the term if we are seeking for men to turn to God, i.e., to be converted; our activity is purposeless unless that is its result, and we can never promise to give it up. In doing this good thing we have to carry the cross of being misrepresented as doing evil.

To say we are doing a good thing assumes that we are consistent, as Christians, in the methods we adopt, but we are frail, and need constant watchfulness and grace lest we fall into temptation and use those methods which we condemn in others, such as use of worldly influence, unfair management of property, unnecessary secrecy, or offences against parental rights and family ties. Under the principle of doing to others what we would have them do

<sup>1</sup>A campaign for the reconversion to Hinduism of those who had left it.



to us, it is useful when reviewing our methods, to consider whether we would approve of them if used by Moslems or Roman Catholics in our own country.

Religious propaganda must be religious in all its spirit and methods; Christian proselytizing efforts must be of the kind which Jesus Himself used in making disciples. In all these things we cannot be too scrupulous. Some offence we must give, for our very belief that we have a message which all men need is objectionable to many. All the more must we be sensitive about using for the spread of the message only such methods as accord with the mind of Christ.

Since evangelism, as the communication of the special revelation of God in Christ, is the sole purpose for which missions are created, it is strange, but widely admitted to be true, that it is not enough being done. Many preparations have to be made for it by study of language and of other religions, or by securing friendly points of contact, and by the time these have been achieved there are useful ancillary institutions to be carried on, and many administrative duties to be done. The result is that a good many missionaries are seldom engaged in the primary task itself, and the absurd position is reached in which it is crowded out by the multiplicity of the very agencies which were created to serve it. The story of a man on an island desiring to cross to another, who to that end decided to build a boat, studied elaborately the art of boat-building, collected materials, became involved in the connected economic questions, spent a life-time in the theory and practice of boat-building, and finally died just as his boat was ready to be launched, would be a parable of

some missionary careers, exaggerated perhaps and unkind, yet not wholly untrue. In these days of elaboration of organization, it is an essential discipline for missionaries to ask themselves periodically what proportion of their time is given to activities which merit being called evangelistic.

Not that it is necessary to close all the organizations and simply preach; they can provide, as was originally intended, openings for preaching. There are missionaries, and they are sometimes the busiest, who can make every contact with others in school or office or hospital an opportunity for passing on some word of God at the right moment. But the danger for most is that schools and hospitals and social uplift are so valuable in themselves, and make such large demands, that it is possible to be fully and usefully engaged in them without thereby making clearer any message about Christ. They *can* be but are not necessarily a potent means of evangelism; and they have in themselves a secular value which if it absorbs the missionary's whole attention is his undoing.

The entire enterprise needs continual watching that means do not become ends in themselves, and that all parts make some real contribution to the evangelism for which the whole exists. There is a call for constant sharpening of the spear-point of the enterprise, namely direct communication of the Gospel by word of mouth. It may be by formal preaching under a tree, by some lesson of a teacher in a school, or by the private talk of one woman to another in a house, but there is no real substitute for the living voice speaking from the heart. There is a widespread feeling among missionaries that we

ought to be more often speaking directly of the things of Christ to those who do not know Him. Since the natural reserve of the British regarding speech on sacred subjects is commonly construed as lack of interest, it is necessary that the fundamental affirmations about God, about our Lord, about the forgiveness of sins and about the life eternal, should be more frequently on our lips as well as in our hearts. There are difficulties varying in every country, but they can be overcome. In most places there are accessible individuals or groups who would listen if they were sought out and talked to with the loving skill which is being devoted to the maintenance of missionary institutions.

The obligation to evangelize rests upon the whole Church, not upon any part of it; this is a fundamental principle for the Church alike at home and abroad. "Evangelism is incomplete until the whole body of energy of the Church is brought to the proper task of the Church, the salvation of the world."<sup>1</sup> The situation alike in the western countries with their drift towards secularism, and in the eastern where Christianity is professed only by a microscopic minority, imperatively calls for the realization of this and practical action upon it. For the missionary it means that his function is quite as much to inspire the local Church to evangelism as to do it himself. Taking the missionary enterprise as a whole, there has not yet been as conspicuous success as we could wish in the imparting of evangelistic zeal to indigenous churches. There have been wonderful sporadic examples such as in Korea<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> From a S.C.M. pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup> See *Korea The Hermit Nation and its Response to Christianity*, by T. S. Soltau (1932), Chapter II. Within half a century of its founding the Korean Protestant Church had a constituency of 265,000.

there are now promising forward evangelistic movements in several great countries. But few missionaries can write as did St. Paul to a young Church<sup>1</sup> "From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord . . . so that we need not to speak anything." All too frequently the local church leaves evangelism of outsiders to the foreign mission as its departmental responsibility. If the mission is itself absorbed in administrative complications the situation is bad indeed. We cannot hope to inspire others to a zeal which we do not ourselves display. If the local church sees the missionary busy with so many good works that he has no time to speak of the gospel, it concludes that good works are the more important, and concentrates on them. The only effective way of imparting to the church the joy and privilege of spreading the good news of God is to be constantly engaged in that occupation in fellowship with the church. The missionary who is a practical westerner with gifts for organization, whose command of the language incidentally is faulty, is yielding to temptation when he makes to his native colleague the apparently sensible suggestion for a division of labour: "You do the preaching while I run the office." Foreigner and native alike must share in both kinds of activity, but with continual emphasis on Gospel witness as the supreme task.

Constant repetition can easily become mechanical, and a message which has lost its freshness has thereby lost its attracting power and become an old gramophone record. But daily renewed personal experience of the grace of God brings daily freshness into a story told a thousand times before. The demand now being made in several countries that the

<sup>1</sup> Thess. i, 8.

missionary should only speak of that which he has tested in his own life is as wholesome as it is exacting for him to meet. The discovery of divine help for each day's new situation lends variety and changing form to a message whose objective essentials cannot change, being the revelation of God through a history which centres in the cross.

It should hardly be necessary, but it may be as St. Paul would say "safe"<sup>1</sup> to insist that for the most part the message of God to men must be delivered through the medium of their mother-tongue. We cannot imagine ourselves being converted through Arabic or Chinese. But no-one who has watched the drift of our times, and the increasing use of English in great mission lands, will consider unnecessary a reminder of the need that the evangelist speak naturally and easily the language of the hearers. The same elaboration of organization which endangers the primary task of evangelism has combined with several other factors, such as the development of education in English, to hamper the missionary in his free use of the vernacular. Yet until he can talk with one who does not know English in such a way that all sense of strangeness disappears and neither notices the words used but only thinks of the message conveyed, he has between him and his hearer something which insulates the hearer from the spiritual current which his own faith is sending out. Phonetics and the science of learning languages have provided improved helps, but these need to be used with strong determination to overcome the currents which in many places are adverse to the highest linguistic attainments.

We come now to the important question of evangelistic objective. Is the aim to convert individuals or to leaven communities, to win new members to the Christian Church or to influence non-Christian societies and peoples in so corporate a manner that at some future day we may anticipate a general change-over to Christianity of the whole "folk"? The plan and policy of the mission will be vitally affected by the answer. If the former of the two aims is adopted, the effort will be to form small select churches of those who have each of them had a vital personal experience of the saving grace of God. If the latter, there will be less separating of chosen persons from their natural social environment, easier standards of admission to Christian fellowship, and less strenuous demands that the indigenous church should be or quickly become a fellowship of the saints. It is easy to reply that both aims must be pursued, that on the one hand the turning of a certain number of individuals to God cannot exhaust the missionary purpose to "make disciples of all nations," and that on the other the most effective leaven in any society is the quickened and converted individual. In practice most missionary societies have combined the two aims without thinking out a definite policy, adjusting their special emphasis to local circumstances. In the early stages of work in Moslem countries it has been empirically found advisable to concentrate upon penetrating the general mind with Christian principle rather than converting individuals who would be turned out of their society. The same is true regarding "purdah" (secluded) women in India. On the other hand, in China it has been found possible to build up the

church from individually converted units without causing social dislocation so serious as to hinder later evangelization. Every missionary hopes for the transformation by the grace of God alike of individuals and of the community; he cherishes a vision of a church consisting of individuals surrendered to Christ, at the heart of a society which is being deeply influenced by His teaching.

But great changes in this generation demand more thorough re-examination of this subject. National-Socialism has demonstrated how far-reaching can be the result of attention to community, folk, nation, and in the political life of Europe there are many examples of transformation of great communities through methods more rapid than the engendering of conviction in the heart of first one individual and then another. In India, the study of what has taken place in the spread of Christianity by village groups commonly known as mass movements of the depressed classes, has led to authoritative pronouncements that the normal method of conversion among people of this kind must be by social groups and not by solitary individuals. In short, the question is a live one for our time, and merits full corporate consideration, to which the following may serve as an introductory summary, based on a brief review of evidence from the Bible, history and modern missionary practice.<sup>1</sup>

As to Biblical teaching, the relation of the individual to God was one of the new truths revealed through the prophets, but he had his standing as a member of a nation which from the Exile onwards was virtually a Church. Judaism never fell into the

<sup>1</sup> Special attention is called to the bibliography on this subject, p. 243.

extreme individualism which has marked some sections of Protestants for whom the sole interest has been the salvation of souls one by one. Jesus showed God's care for the one lost soul in the parables of Luke xv, which must always be the pattern for the missionary. Yet He also spoke such parables as that of the sower whose "field is the world"; of the drag-net and the tares, which suggest wholesale dealing in this age; and of the great supper where servants compel people from the byways to come in, regardless of their standing or even whether they have a wedding garment; most of all the parable of the leaven placed in the lump. The Kingdom of God which was "like unto" these things, in the general teaching of our Lord was wider in its scope than the life of a church of converted individuals.

St. Paul's epistles were written to small churches of people personally saved by faith. Nevertheless it is clear that normally whole families were baptized together,<sup>1</sup> presumably without too close inquiry into the individual faith of each member. If the family could be thus dealt with collectively, why not in principle the clan or group? There is abundant evidence of sub-Christian elements within the Church even in apostolic times. These grow more prominent in the later periods and in the mass accessions after the time of Constantine. Harnack's great study of the spread of Christianity in the first three centuries shows how small a part can have been played by the gathering together of individual converts with a high standard of spiritual life.

When we come to the Middle Ages it is clear that

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi, 15 and 33.



the pre-Christian religion was not an affair of the individual, but a corporate loyalty of clan, tribe or race. The group must move together or not at all, so the king or some similar natural leader moved first and the rest followed as a matter of course.<sup>1</sup> In cases where missionary zeal was complicated or perverted by political considerations, there even occurred the strange phenomenon of wholesale forcible conversions. Europe still suffers even to-day from the entail of this unfortunate start; yet would anyone affirm that there would be a better Europe to-day if it had continued pagan, or even if most of its population had continued pagan while small churches or monasteries slowly increased the number of individual converts? The mediaeval saints whose hymns we still sing, to our spiritual enrichment, were in some cases descendants of those who had been converted en masse. While the story of the conversion of Europe offers many warnings against wrong missionary methods, its evidence as a whole shows the naturalness and inevitability of dealing as much with groups as with individuals wherever paganism itself has been a matter for the group, and that appears to be everywhere in modern pagan lands.

Roman Catholics, probably owing to this past history, have always emphasized the community more than Protestants, and their tendency is towards easier standards of admission to the Church. The permanence of the churches established by very wholesale methods, as in the case of those in India begun by St. Francis Xavier, suggests that community feeling, once conversion has taken

<sup>1</sup> See Addison, *The Medieval Missionary*, p. 21.

place, may assist in the maintenance of erections whose foundations are not deeply dug.

The earliest Protestant missions were much influenced by German pietism, and this resulted in the ideal of small churches of the saints. But actual experience in countries where corporate movements have followed on single conversions, with on the whole beneficial results, has profoundly affected the Protestant attitude. The harmful effect upon the individual convert of isolation from his own community, resulting sometimes even in moral deterioration; his inevitable dependence on the missionary and attachment to the foreign organization which has befriended him rather than to the indigenous church, which greets him with caution not unmingled with suspicion; his cruel difficulties regarding marriage and general social relationships, all have been heavy debit items in the account of individual conversion. Where social groups have moved together most of these difficulties have been avoided, and there has come about naturally an indigenous Christian community life. That community life itself has proved, most strikingly in India, to be an attraction to other communities, so that the very system of caste which has presented a stubborn resistance to any change of faith may prove in the long run, when whole communities have begun to move, of great assistance in the process of the conversion of India. Provided the utmost care is exercised to keep exclusive community feelings out of the Church, useful account can be taken of social groupings in the arrangement of any evangelistic programme.

While this experience has been gained abroad, the

Church in the West has been discovering afresh its gospel for society as well as for the individual. It has a new conscience about social and economic life, a new sense that industrialism needs to be penetrated by Christianity, all the more because the worst evils associated with it in the West are repeating themselves in Asia and Africa. The International Missionary Council has asserted "with all the power at its command, its conviction that the Gospel of Christ contains a message, not only for the individual soul, but for the world of social organization and economic relations in which individuals live."<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion from all this is that more than before we must as evangelists look beyond individuals to their social groups, beyond social groups to whole peoples, and set before us as Warneck counselled, the Christianizing of peoples and races as our definite aim. The winning of individuals must necessarily be the first step, for communities do not move without leaders. Those who with unmeasured suffering, first of all their tribe or community, have by faith borne isolation and the loss of all things—and not a few of them are living to-day—have not suffered in vain, but have made possible the salvation of their own people. Their whole people must now be the objective in evangelism. At the same time, communities must on no account be accepted as Christian without such testing and instruction as will ensure that their movement has a religious motive; we may not sow our own field with tares. More will be said later about the conditions necessary for baptism, but there is much practical wisdom in emphasizing the catechumen status and preserv-

<sup>1</sup> *Jerusalem Report*, Vol. V, p. 181.

ing a fairly lengthy catechumen period. Only so can we escape the evils which followed the wholesale conversions of the Middle Ages. But if we can turn the heart of an African tribe or a Chinese village clan, of a group of Indian outcaste families or the population of some small South Sea Island, to hope even dimly in Christ as revealing the one holy God, and to desire His way of life, we may with a good conscience deal with them collectively without setting too high standards for individual members of the group. This is different from accepting hordes who come for some purely secular purpose, and supposing that once accepted they can be taught and Christianized. The beginning of spiritual life may be small as mustard seed (and capable of growth as great) but without seed at all there can be no growth, however much the soil be tilled. While mistakes have sometimes been made in practice, in principle Roman Catholic and Protestant missions alike condemn the notion that the process of Christianizing essentially pagan people may begin at baptism.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GOSPEL AND THE ANIMIST

WE have seen that in the history which centres in Jesus Christ there is a special revelation of God which is good news for mankind. It is the same good news for all, but since men and women are all different it impinges on them differently, and has to be conveyed with widely varying idiom and emphasis. Each man receives it in his own way, but here we must be content to study its impact upon large human groups, and we begin with the largest of all, the believers in spirits.

First we must look into their mind, recalling for our help whatever we have learnt from anthropology. Theirs is the religion and philosophy of all non-civilized peoples; their outlook on life has certain main common features. The term Animism was first used by Tylor in 1867 for "the state of mind which sees in all nature the action of animated life and the presence of innumerable spiritual beings." There are stages in it; when things are thought of as alive before there is any conception of a soul, it is called animatism. Little children who say Good-morning or Good-bye to the flowers in their garden or make up stories in which the sun and the moon behave like living beings, are at this stage of animatism. There must be very few people still remaining there, though there is a rich nature-mythology which has this origin. A step further has been taken when the "livingness" of things is explained by the idea

of their being inhabited by "souls" or "spirits", which is the theory of animism proper.

On the one side, by rejecting any purely materialistic account of the world, animism faces towards a true philosophy, and is the seed from which have ultimately grown such lofty systems as Platonism. Anthropologists like Dr. Marett<sup>1</sup> see in it the beginning of the specifically human self-consciousness, and the psychologist McDougall gives to his book *Body and Mind*, the sub-title *A defence of Animism*. On the other hand, animism as commonly encountered is by no means only a spiritual philosophy, for its concern is with a life stuff, as it were an elixir of vitality, which flows in greater or less degree into things, animals, plants, living beings, or objects connected with the dead. The purpose of religion is to protect and increase one's life stuff; it may be through ritual or magic; it may be by some contribution from the dead before their life stuff returns to the common stock; or it may be through head-hunting and cannibalism by which the life stuff of others is added to one's own. The life stuff inhabits not only men or trees or dead ancestors, but other innumerable spirits which all must be reckoned with.

The world-wide sway of such notions is astonishing, and is matched by their persistence in time as an incongruous element in the higher religions, or in some circles of civilized people. There is not a little animism in some of the stories of Mary Webb, and in broadcast talks under the heading "Things I cannot explain."<sup>2</sup> Something from animism has been sublimated<sup>3</sup> in our own religion, while in circles

<sup>1</sup> *The Threshold of Religion* (1914)

<sup>2</sup> E.g., *Listener*, January 8th, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> See page 131.

on its fringe superstitions connected with animism survive, though condemned. In Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Muhammedanism as to-day practised there is a very large, sometimes a predominating, element of animism, and no attempt is made to shake it off. Whenever in the West faith is at the ebb, there is a noticeable recrudescence of essentially animistic notions. "Each of us has an Africa and all its prodigies within him, and there is a mystery here with strange warnings and intimations to disturb our serenity; it is only religion which can penetrate that ultimate darkness and disperse the devils of our own making."<sup>1</sup>

In short, this is what may more truly claim the title "Natural Religion" than that which is usually designated by the term. This is the account of the unseen which unsophisticated man produces as he considers life and death, the world around him, its appearances and disappearances, his dreams, the experience of his fellows, his hard and his prosperous times, and especially the uncanny things which he comes across. He is too busy hunting or otherwise keeping himself and his family alive to be consciously philosophizing; all the same he has a compact philosophy of nature, which is more practically important to the missionary than any of the higher religions. The religious statistics of the world may show fewer animists than Hindus or Buddhists, but millions of those classified under the higher religions have the animist's view of life. "Animistic heathenism must be taken as seriously as the higher religions of Greece and India."<sup>2</sup> Most missionaries are in

<sup>1</sup> Father d'Arcy, *Listener*, February 24th, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel*, p. 81.

much more constant contact with animism than with the higher religions for which they have been prepared by text-books on the history of religion.

While its essential features are everywhere the same, its manifestations in customs and mythology have naturally varied in each country, and fresh modifications, sometimes degenerations, are constantly appearing. In not a few places the present practices bear marks of having sunk from some early higher level. There is thus no means of saving the new missionary the trouble of diligent search and sympathetic effort to understand the precise feeling of the particular primitive people among whom he is placed. Yet in addition to what has already been said of the theory of soul stuff which gives life and prosperity, a good deal can be set down as true of animists everywhere.

Do they believe in God? Strangely enough, for most if not all the answer must be Yes, in the sense that they readily assent to the statement that a supreme Being exists, but No if it means that they have a faith in Him which affects their life. The common idea is that the Supreme is too exalted to be bothered with their small affairs, which are the concern of humbler spirits or devils, whom alone the worshipper would be wise to propitiate. That they think of this Supreme at all is remarkable, and those who believe in original universal monotheism are entitled to stress it, yet its value for life has been effectively neutralized. What is practically operative is the belief in an unknown number of spirits which mostly have no personal characteristics and are capricious in their behaviour; the majority have not even a name. The animist lives surrounded by



sprites, goblins or devils in trees, rocks or any unusual object. *Anything* may happen, because though some sprites, such as the disease-bringers, may be known, no-one knows what others there may be or what may offend them. Those great regularities with which science has stabilized life in the West simply are not there. That action A will always be followed by consequence B no-one can say, for the spirits may determine otherwise. The haunting crowd of incalculables, some of which thoroughly deserve the name of devils, depresses both the intellectual and the moral life; it is even worse to be subject to the morally inferior or the a-moral than to the irrational.

Here it is that the missionary in close touch with the daily life of primitive peoples finds it difficult to retain the respect for animism common among students of theory. The forms of it which he encounters bar the road to progress in either understanding or morality, and their practical operations are cruelly destructive of human values. There has been much discussion as to whether this can rightly be called a religion of fear. Some anthropologists aver that this description is due to the mistaken supposition that the animist feels as the modern white man would if so haunted, whereas most of his time he is cheerfully going about his daily occupations, only remembering the dangers from spirits as much as the white man remembers the dangers from infectious germs. There is some truth in this so far as it concerns the daily routine of life. Primitive man is no sensitive plant; even his mind, like the under surface of his bare foot, has developed a tough protecting skin enabling him to pass con-

tentedly through circumstances which would drive us mad. But unexpected happenings, calamities and death, pierce the skin to make raw wounds of terror which is unmistakable. The anthropologist has missed something if he has never seen the animistic fears in times of epidemics producing conduct as inhuman as it is pitiable. The cruelties associated with animism are explained at their worst by these fears—people mad with terror may do anything. The testimony of converts may sometimes be biased but it is too voluminous and definite to be altogether set aside. One of them who himself is a cultured graduate of a university and who gives striking instances of this fear, writes with profound seriousness that “It is one thing to read about animism in text-books on religion; it is altogether a different thing to live through the experiences of the animistic consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> To him the reign of the spirits represents an intolerable tyranny driving sometimes to suicide itself. Hardly less depressing than the fear is the element of uncertainty. One may have propitiated all the known spirits but there are many more unknown. It is as if one could not find out how many creditors may have a claim upon one’s small balance in the bank; a condition paralysing to all rational dealing with finance.

A system marked by such fear and uncertainty cannot breed happiness. The healthy animist may often go through the day with a cheery grin, yet the moment something going wrong uncovers deeper levels, the sadness is revealed of a life without hope. Perhaps this same hopelessness explains the fatalism which is almost universal among animists, although

<sup>1</sup> M. Sanjiva Rau, *Types of Religious Consciousness*, p. 10.

it is no necessary inference from the "life stuff" theory. A man's nature and the things which will happen to him are settled beforehand, so it is useless to make great efforts.

In short, the missionary may agree with the anthropologists that animism is an interesting system, and recognize in it the first steps towards a religious interpretation of life, yet at the same time fervently desire to change the mind of those animists among whom he lives. His business as evangelist is to communicate the knowledge of the special revelation of God given to mankind in the history which centres in Jesus Christ. To make that history real to the animist is a formidable task. It seems at first remote from his practical interests; it does not promise to give him more food, to make any magic contribution to his vitality, or to give him sons and prestige among his fellows. He assumes that it is an affair of the European people just as his own religious culture is the affair of his tribe. Religion, for all primitives, is a matter of tribe or stock far more than of the individual. To become a Christian, he naturally thinks at first, would be to become a European, which is impossible. To change the ancestral ways, to infringe custom which has occupied for him the position we assign to conscience, to incur the wrath of the dead and the living, is perilous in the extreme. It will affect the growth of his crops, his physical agility, his prosperity in undertakings, and it may well mean that some offended spirit brings about his death. No wonder the message which brings healing for his ills is received at first with a strong passive resistance or with open hostility. It could not be otherwise. The wonder

is rather that in the last century animism has so extensively been replaced by Christian faith, for the missionary has to start from further back than did St. Paul, who preached either to monotheists or to those who were influenced by Graeco-Roman culture.

Yet in spite of the apparent remoteness and objectionable features of the Gospel, the animist has often been under influences which have prepared the way for it. Contact with civilization, in itself dangerously disintegrating, at least reveals that there are other cultures than his own, and the better sides of western life are not always hidden. Wonder at the white man's power provokes questioning as to its source. Hardship and disease have made him miserable with a sense of need which is a good soil for the Gospel. The friendly helpfulness of a Christian evangelist may have touched some deeply buried chord in his feelings. Most wonderful of all, as missionaries everywhere testify, here and there emerges a man or woman who in such surroundings is a miracle, an individual with courage to swim against the strong tide of tribal sentiment, a soul with capacity for a divine message half consciously awaited and now joyously welcomed whatever the cost. Every great mass movement, in Madagascar, in Africa, in the East Indian Archipelago, among Indian outcastes, or in the South Sea Islands, owes almost everything at some early stage to a few such leaders, whom the Spirit of God, apart from all human agencies, had made ready before the gospel came. These are the real heroes, and sometimes the martyrs in the Christian story.

The Gospel which is the same for all men includes points of special relevance to the animist's need.

Whereas hitherto the high God has had a shadowy and passive existence in the background of the mind, He now comes to the foreground of attention, as the real maker of the world, controller of its happenings and one who cares for His children. He, not the spirits nor magic, gives or withholds life. His creation and providence is the joyful fact which the animist had not known. His unity is good news; to deal with one lord instead of an unknown host is in itself a liberation. He alone is to be feared, not the spirits which have no power before Him; and worshipped, for He is accessible. He is known in the deeds He has done, the greatest of them being His incarnation in Jesus Christ. To be His is to be taken right out of the kingdom of darkness where the goblins afflict, into the sphere of light which He alone controls, where His own have fellowship with Him and do His will in daily life.

All this and more is in the message, but how can it be made plain? Not, most certainly, by starting with mere negations of what the animist holds sacred. Those thoughtless westerners—they can rarely be missionaries—who simply say "What nonsense," and laugh out of court his ghostly presences, are destroying, if he listens to them, his sense of the unseen without which a true Christian faith is impossible. There may come a right time and place for iconoclasm, but only for the convert's own, when he feels he must break with something in his past, and by that time he will know that there is also something which he can carry forward. He need not, must not, give up the sense of religious awe, the feeling for what Otto taught us to call the "numin-

ous," which has its rightful place on the heights as well as in the valleys of religious experience. That feeling has only found a worthier object. It is mad folly to stop a man believing in devils by methods which also stop him from believing in God. Yet this is being done by the secularism which is spreading round the world through many agencies, the contacts of trade, the cinema, or systems of education meant for the natives' good but barring out religion, ending in superficial enlightenment which scoffs at all but the material. To-day, in many lonely or beautiful or terrible places, little shrines of animistic worship still witness to a sense of "something deeply interfused" with the loveliness or the mystery. As things are developing such places seem destined to become parks or tea-houses, but the world will be no better thereby, and the animist will be spiritually homeless.

There is little chance of conveying anything to him by argumentation. The method must be by firm, "dogmatic," believing statement. In the countries from which missionaries come there may be room for occasional preaching which is full of question marks, designed to awaken the thoughtless out of "dogmatic" slumber, always provided such preaching is balanced by habitual proclamation of positive and saving truth. But the animist already sufficiently distressed by uncertainty finds no attraction in a fresh set of doubts and surmises. The missionary with difficulties about his own faith is no messenger for him. Even the precise theologian is hampered by the crudity of the language which perforce must be used since none other is intelligible. His razor is not the best tool for cutting down trees.

He is under the same limitation as the journalist who drafts headlines for the daily newspaper display; much must be said in thick type, in words few but arresting, which draws the reader to buy the paper that he may know more. Even so there is a clear difference between the headline which is broadly true and that which is false or misleading, and the simple evangelistic address to primitive people must resemble the former. Like the parent in a Christian home teaching spiritual truth to a young child, the missionary to the animist must be definite, use the language of his hearer, and state concrete fact with authority. Then the truth gradually attests itself, even to a stunted religious capacity, as a message from God Himself.

In the West the natural beginning is from the more or less consciously felt need of salvation from sin. Not so with primitive peoples. With them custom is the dominating principle in the rudimentary moral life, and custom by its very nature must oppose any change. The ordinary man, however dissatisfied with what happens to him, is quite satisfied with his own behaviour, and the least promising opening is to suggest that he should change it. The general feeling of uncertainty and wretchedness is different from what we know as a sense of sin, which usually does not appear until a late stage. The fundamental trouble of the animist is that he does not know the living God, and the message must first give him that knowledge. To all of us God is made known in his acts; revelation to mankind came that way. The truth about God can only enter our lowly doors "embodied in a tale," supremely in the true tale of the incarnation. The message of

the living God comes most clearly to the animist as to the rest of us through stories.

Here the Old Testament proves to have a special function all its own, for certain reasons which are fairly obvious, and for a more profound reason usually unnoticed. In some ways it is easier for the primitive than for ourselves to understand. The structure of society in clans or tribes; the life near to the soil, dependent upon the gifts which the seasons bring; the longing for offspring; the visions and dreams; the simple forthright offences and punishments; all these things are part of his own experience. Whereas the white man comes as someone strange and foreign, his God as revealed in the stories from the Old Testament is familiar and homely. These provide a necessary primary, junior and elementary course in religious understanding; he could not start his education in the upper class of the New Testament. The mere fact that the Old Testament is longer, covering a great stretch of history, and dealing with groups and nations, men and women, in an immense variety of circumstance, means that somewhere in it is just the right story for the animist in his specific perplexity; this is his appropriate religious and ethical primer. There is a large volume of testimony from Africa and elsewhere that such people like the Old Testament, and that it cures them of the seriously evil things in their previous animism. This does not mean that congregations must be for a long period so nourished on the Old Testament that they regard it as the whole Bible, or fail to realize the new and supreme gift to the world in Jesus Christ. It does mean that the Old Testament stories are the right means of opening



the eyes of the animist to the one living God, and the world in which He reigns. "The hearer of the Old Testament stories learns how God must be feared; he learns also how He should be loved and trusted. The inward experience of these facts must overthrow his animistic system, and produce a dim sense of man's freedom and responsibility. Thus by means of these stories there rises imperceptibly a new world of moral and religious ideas."<sup>1</sup>

The deeper and less noticed reason is that the Old Testament is the literary record of the process by which a people was led out of animism to that lofty ethical monotheism which made it ready for Jesus to be born in its midst. Ever since W. Robertson Smith wrote in 1889 his *Religion of the Semites*<sup>2</sup> it has been clear that this religion in its main features was a good sample of the religion of primitive man everywhere. Robertson Smith's main interest in studying it was in delving deep into the primitive thoughts of mankind, in order to show the relation of these to the highest revealed religion. The Semites had no special religious capacity; rather their taboos and holy places, their mythology and ritual, serve as excellent illustrations of primitive systems such as still confront the missionary in many places. The Old Testament shows such a system being gradually replaced by something altogether higher. Abraham at the call of God comes out of it. Moses and the prophets, explaining the deliverances of their people, show that no local Baals or animistic spirits had achieved them but Jehovah. Reversion to the old heathenism, to which they were

<sup>1</sup> Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel*, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> See especially the 3rd edition with introduction and additional notes by S. A. Cook, 1927.

always prone until the time of the Exile, was unfaithfulness as it were of a bride to a husband. The heathen practices so constantly denounced, the haunting ghosts of the earlier Semitic religion, are like the similar ghosts of earlier heathenism which haunt some living Christian congregations to-day. There is good evidence that the Semitic religion out of which Israel was divinely led, and which it was for several centuries tempted to combine with the worship of Jehovah, was in its essential features the very same heathenism as confronts the missionary in an Indian village to-day. The whole story of the Jewish revelation is that of the animist evangelized and built up in loyalty to the one living Creator and Lord. Therein consists the deeper relevance of the Old Testament to missionary work among animists.

If we can trace the methods by which the transition from animism to monotheism was effected, the missionary will thereby receive guidance which possesses supreme authority. Lapham<sup>1</sup> has shown the work of Moses as an effort to personalize God, by intentional use of "anthropic" language, by teaching the Name of the Deity, by showing Him not as the God of a land but of a people wherever that people might wander, and by the simple regulations for ethics and religion contained in the "Book of the Covenant." These are all tools which the missionary can use. Similar studies could be made of the means used by the prophets to wipe out Baal worship and everything associated with it.

Many a passage in the Old Testament, even in the Psalms, reveals a richer spiritual content when read not by a modern western but by someone whose

<sup>1</sup> *The Bible as Missionary Handbook*, 1925, pp. 54-74.

mind is being delivered from old animistic fears. Take for example such familiar words as the following from Psalm cxlv, with comments of the animist inserted in brackets :

My God and King, I will extol thee :

and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

(I had no cause to bless the spirits, they were not my God, they had no name.)

Generation shall praise thy works unto generation, and declare thy power.

(Ancestral traditions of magic which overawed and enslaved us are replaced by fathers telling children of the might of their God and King who has saved them.)

The eyes of all wait upon thee ;

and thou givest them their meat in due season.

Thou openest thy hand :

and fillest all things living of thy good pleasure.

(There is no life stuff to be precariously guarded by unethical or cruel means. There is a bountiful giver who cares for all and loves to give them what they need.)

Such points of emphasis stand out in all examination of the Bible teaching for animists. That God is creator and provider is indeed good news. Sometimes they put it to the test in a bitter hour of trial, and not infrequently it seems that God honours such testing, which has in it more of faith than of doubt. In the creation stories, and all those which tell of the divine care for man, a dawning light begins to penetrate the deepest shadows of an anxious life. The certainty about matters unseen and hitherto unknowable is a blessed relief; which is an additional reason why preaching should always be positive and

authoritative. Gradually they are liberated from their old world which was governed by the powers of darkness, and come into the kingdom of light where God reigns.

This becomes more certain as they become able to receive the message of the New Testament. The one living God becomes yet more personal as they see Him in the face of Jesus, and calls forth completer allegiance. And with the message of incarnation and atonement which saves us all they perceive something whose significance for most of us had almost faded out. Jesus came, says the New Testament, to destroy the works of the devil; He cast out demons Himself, and gave the power to cast them out to His disciples. That is for the animist no mere extra but one of the most vital parts of the Gospel. This is not the place for a discussion of the phenomena of demon possession, or of the precise degree of reality which they represent to us moderns, but their very prominence in the Gospel narrative, and the many references to supernatural powers in the Epistles, as well as in the early history of the Christian Church, witness that Christianity can and does deliver from the terrors always associated with animism. This is a portion of the Gospel to be firmly proclaimed, and we lose the clue to much of the contents of the New Testament when we slur it over. It is significant that a scholar expounding the Gospel of St. Paul was able to draw much light upon his references to the tyranny of dark powers from his own missionary contact with animism,<sup>1</sup> and that in outlining the expansion of Christianity in the first three centuries Harnack found it necessary to devote

<sup>1</sup> S. Cave, *The Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 145 f. (1928).

a whole chapter<sup>1</sup> to the conflict with demons. The message of the missionary who has studied such matters must not be that demons do not exist; he would not be believed and how can he prove such a negative, but that Christ is stronger than the host of them, and in Christ men are delivered from their power. That is undeniably true; the first Church said it, and it is confirmed by things happening in many parts of the world in our own time.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mission and Expansion*, Book II, Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> Vivid narratives of present-day devil possession and of its cure by Christianity can be seen in M. Sanjiva Rau, *Types of Religious Consciousness*, pp. 10-14, Basel Mission, Mangalore, and in Harold Begbie's *Other Sheep*, pp. 76-96.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONVERSION AMONG ANIMISTS

SOME useful work has been done and more remains to be undertaken, in sympathetic examination of the process of conversion of primitive peoples, assisted by recent studies in the psychology of religion.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for us to over-estimate the revolution in the animist's whole outlook upon the world and upon life which conversion implies. Consequently the missionary has to be thorough in his instruction and patient in his waiting.

The process begins when the animist's attention is aroused by something which to him seems surprising, though to the missionary it may be ordinary and not of the essence of his gospel. Wonder is the first stage of many on the convert's long mental pilgrimage. Further on is the admission that "these things may be true, but they concern the young people only." Still later a man may say he knows, but his heart is not yet awake, and he seems to feel no responsibility for waking it up. Then something happens, perhaps a great calamity which seems to call for a definite decision. There follows a painful struggle between the old and the new, sometimes referred to as having two hearts or minds, and at that stage in particular he deserves to be treated with affectionate understanding. At some

<sup>1</sup> See Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel*; W. Freytag, *Zur Psychologie der Bekehrung bei Primitiven*, an Essay in *Botschafter an Christi Statt*, 1932; R. Allier, *La Psychologie de la Conversion chez les peuples non-civilisés*, 1925.

advanced point comes the recognition that certain behaviour is against the will of God, the momentous personal joining of ethics and religion, with a dim perception alike of God's moral demand and of his own inability to meet it. This immeasurably deepens the struggle. Not infrequently comes a dream, which represents nothing "Freudian," but the repressed new feelings, and reinforces the desire for that which has caused them. At last, it may be under the stress of some strong emotion, one of the "two hearts" conquers the other. There is a decisive act of the will, and a change which is felt as a change of allegiance (not of opinion), i.e. as becoming the subject of another ruler. Old things like image worship, magic rites, or degrading social customs, are definitely given up because the whole government of life to which they belonged is renounced. New obligations like the learning of Christian doctrine, public worship, sending the children to school, are accepted as the order of the new kingdom. The truer the conversion the more there is a real death to the old and birth of the new, in some cases marked by intense joy, expressed in the happy new names chosen at baptism. The convert from that time onward regards himself as a Christian complete, little realizing that ahead of him lie many fresh struggles and crises, in each of which he must in essence repeat his conversion decision.

An immensely important practical question is "At what point in this process of conversion should the inquirer be received into the Christian community, whether by baptism or, in the case of the Friends or certain orders of Baptists, by some other public and solemn act with similar significance?" It is here

that there is most danger of building into the Church wood, hay or stubble which will be destroyed by fire. Also there is the opposite danger of discouraging early enthusiasm, of requiring standards of attainment which virtually place high bars across the door into the fold, and of usurping the prerogative of judging men which belongs to God. *What is the minimum demand to be made upon any primitive illiterate man or woman before reception into the Christian community?*

We have agreed above that our dealings shall be not only with individuals but with social groups; also that social groups are not to be accepted as Christian without testing whether their movement, however mixed, has a religious aspiration as its driving force; and that usually it is wise to require a fairly long period of instruction. Plainly baptism or its equivalent cannot take place before the beginning of the process sketched above. An increasing volume of experience suggests that it should come well in advance of its end. That sketch is of the experience of those natural leaders of groups or tribes whom God calls to guide their fellows. It can hardly be expected to indicate, until whole generations have elapsed, the actual change of heart of each man, woman and child. Yet if the door of the Christian community is held closed against the more backward, the group or tribe is divided, the advantages of social solidarity are lost, and, more serious still, the help which feeble beginners can draw from the corporate life of the Church is denied to them. The Church and its sacraments are not prizes for high attainments achieved without their aid, but divinely appointed means of grace, that is, helps for



frail mortals who have not deserved them. The ideal of the small "gathered" church of the saints has validity for its own time and place, but not for the early stages of church building among primitive people. It is true that workers to-day, occasionally discouraged by heathenish happenings inside the church, wish that the pioneers had only accepted one by one such as gave proof of their personal experience of the grace of God. But that method actually was followed in the founding of some churches whose spiritual life to-day is no higher than that of the rest. Corporate influence when sanctified is an aid necessary to all normal human beings.

Then what is to be the test for admission? Scripture precedent and the whole experience of missions point to dealing with families, and requiring that the parents have enough knowledge of the Lord Jesus to find God in Him, and in the manner suited to their understanding and culture, to surrender their wills to serve and follow Him in their individual life and in the nurture of their children. Jesus, however mistily perceived, must be in the foreground of their minds, as showing forth the God to whom they pledge themselves as subjects. The mists can gradually be cleared away if they have sensed that a great and loving Divine One calls them, and respond after their own primitive fashion. They could answer no questions about the Four Gospels, but there is in them the beginning of the obedience of faith. It is spiritually as high a standard as any of us can satisfy, but when interpreted by those who truly understand the primitive mind it will admit many who would fail without such sympathetic interpretation. It matters little how rudimentary is

the perception of the Saviour or how crude the bending of the will to Him; if there is sincerity there is the seed of future growth which the divine Spirit can water and fructify.

That is the only true test for admission to Christian fellowship. Semi-intellectual additional tests, such as literacy, or ability to repeat Scripture passages or creeds, are only to be used if they become a part of this test of faith. For example, missionaries in Africa when dealing with candidates who could perfectly well learn to read their Bibles are entitled to postpone the baptism of those who will not take the trouble to do so. Their slackness indicates some defect in their faith, and as it is highly desirable that Church members should have access to their Scriptures (though there have been illiterate churches in history and they are much better than no churches at all) a little pressure towards Bible reading is wholesome. But literacy tests would be wrong if they excluded old people who could not pass them yet who seriously desire to serve the Lord Jesus. Hence it has not been possible to use them on a large scale in dealing with the depressed classes in India.

So with the Apostles' Creed. A summary of the great Christian facts such as it contains must inevitably form part, as it has done throughout the Church's history, of the teaching given at very early stages. Yet the ability to recite the words of the Creed can be a mere memory test, and insistence on it may be misunderstood by those accustomed to belief in the efficiency of magic formulae. A candidate, unless extremely backward, ought to know as much as is in the Apostles' Creed, yet he must not

think that by learning to recite it he can persuade the minister to baptize him. The same applies to the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. One who can master them and does not is hardly likely to possess an earnest faith qualifying him for admission, but if he does master them, it is his faith, not his competence in repetition, which qualifies him. At certain cultural levels it will be necessary to admit to the Church some who can repeat nothing, yet who have a real though ill-expressed faith in their new-found Lord.

We have spoken hitherto of the minimum requirement for admission to the Christian community. It is vital to the Church of the future that instruction should be continued for a considerable time after admission. The point at which new converts are admitted is of less importance than the total amount of teaching imparted to them both before and after. It is quite natural for the newly-baptized convert to think he has passed his examination and need learn no more. It is equally natural for hard-pressed pastors and evangelists, who have other uninstructed congregations to prepare for baptism, to reduce to a minimum their courses of post-baptismal instruction. But it is ruinous to Christian growth, and much of the weakness of Churches where there have been mass movements is traceable to this one cause.

The new Christian must have such a knowledge of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord that he knows Him in whom he has believed. He must learn to worship in public and in private. He must practise the rudiments of Christian conduct. He whose social group life has hitherto been all-

important must identify himself with the Church as the body of Christ.

This involves a systematic course of teaching, but until it has been given the process of evangelism is not complete, and the Church-building into which it should merge cannot begin. Nothing was clearer in the survey of mass movements in India made in 1932-4 than the immense importance of the early stages of instruction, and the seriousness of stopping short at baptism. Here is a great task on which all the science of "religious education" needs to be focused. The need is equally for a sound curriculum and for wise practical guidance and encouragement.

The first month is often the most critical, because it shows the converts the consequences of their decision, perhaps in persecution by opponents, and brings up situations and problems which will test whether the new allegiance is strong enough to overcome the undertow of the old familiar influences. Few foreigners can realize the strength of the undertow, or the strain involved in the change-over from the old half-magical world of superstition to the new world opened up by the Christian revelation. It is not fair to leave simple primitives to go through that strain without the help near at hand of some sympathetic friend such as a Christian teacher. But they can be taught to take part in services and in corporate prayer; some of them bring to such exercises a natural reverence which proves their spiritual capacity. Worship does more than anything else to transform their life internally and externally. Some can learn to read their Bibles and all can become familiar with the Christian story.

As to Christian conduct, the tendency at first is to ask for a detailed series of commands and prohibitions such as "May we drive the monkeys out of the maize on Sundays"? Or "Must we stand or kneel when we pray?" As with some passages in the Old Testament, the "Torah" or guidance necessary to the early stages of their life can easily become detailed legislation. But their very earnestness about details of conduct enables them, as it enables little children in a family, to be led onward to the understanding of Christian liberty in the spirit.

Every event in those early days is a factor in education. The first funeral conducted with Christian rites teaches forcibly the Christian hope of immortality. The first Christian marriage alters a host of heathen notions about relations between men and women. The first persecution bravely endured is an initiation into the bearing of the cross. The first serious misconduct involving discipline reveals both the new standards of conduct and the way of Christ in leading sinners to repentance. Whoever has accepted the responsibility of receiving primitive people as Christians, is responsible for walking with them at least for the first few steps along the new road, until their tread gains a little strength, their faces are firmly set towards the light, and a Christian corporate life has become established.

Before we leave the subject of animism, we should learn from its history as reflected in the Bible a lesson highly important to the growth of the Church among primitive populations. There is in it a sense of unseen mystery, which is not wrong, and which actually was taken up into the scriptural revelation of God. There is also much which is

contrary to truth but is apt to persist for centuries as weakening superstition within the Church.

Söderblom has shown that the new teaching about "Jahweh" which Moses gave to the Israelites had elements which must have been derived from animism. The terrifying manifestations on Mt. Sinai showing God as near, awful, and inescapable, a God who acts vehemently and with "jealousy" and must at all costs be obeyed; the tabus concerning images, or the divine name, or work on the sabbath; these are distinctly animistic features taken up into the worship of the one God.<sup>1</sup> They were modified in the course of the religious education of the Hebrew people, but they persisted and are powerful to-day in Christianity as well as in Judaism. They represent that "numinous" element which Otto showed to be essential in religion in all its stages. The feeling of trembling before the mystery of the divine was felt and imparted by the prophets as much as by Moses, and by the Lord Jesus as much as by the prophets. That sense of the awe-ful which began with primitive fear of spirits has been refined into the trembling humility of the creature in the presence of the Creator, who is revealed as Father yet remains a high Mystery above all. What was once a mere shudder is transfigured into that feeling of reverence with which in Christian worship we repeat such words as "Holy, Holy, Holy."<sup>2</sup>

Then what are we to say of the ugly fact that old heathen forms of animism cling to some Christians for decades, and that there are sporadic outbreaks of superstitious practices in churches which have had a

<sup>1</sup> *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens*, N. Söderblom, p. 327.

<sup>2</sup> See Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, Chapters X and XI.

century of nominal Christianity? Two things; first that halting between two opinions is a natural human weakness about which the Bible is full of teaching. The prophets, for example, were continually warning those who thought they could combine their old animism, called Baal-worship, with the worship of "Jahweh"; in the New Testament St. Paul had to deal at Corinth with similar mixture, drinking the cup of the Lord and the cup of idols. The cure for relapsing churches is an improved knowledge of the Scriptures, which will reveal that "either-or" in religion which they cannot escape.

But second it is more important for all who guide the younger churches to realize that the old superstitions fall away when the needs which gave rise to them are fully met within the Church. If in the Church's life everything is bright and brotherly but nothing majestic calls for reverence, the animist will miss something which he once had and be tempted to return to it. Worship which is only a social meeting coloured by religion, instead of contact with the Almighty Lord God who is to be feared above all gods, will not hold the animist. He will go back to that which at any rate made him bow down in shuddering fear before the mysterious. The numinous, as we have already seen, has its rightful place in religion on the heights. If that place is not given to it, we may be driving some primitive people back to superstition.

## CHAPTER IX

### GOOD NEWS OF REALITY: THE MESSAGE FOR HINDUS

As we turn to consider whether we need revise our message to the followers of the higher religions, we recall wise words spoken at Jerusalem in 1928. "We study other religions in order to approach men wisely, yet at the last we speak as men to men, inviting them to share with us the pardon and the life we have found in Christ."<sup>1</sup> It is not our business to become "orientalists," nor do we presume to appraise the spirituality or the ethical fervour of systems which hold together millions of our fellow-men. Our concern is only that those fellow-men should not miss "the pardon and life in Christ" through their own presuppositions or through our failure to understand their speech about divine things.

We are not necessarily thinking of different groups of people as we speak of animists, Hindus, Buddhists or adherents of other eastern religions. Not only is animism mingled, as we have seen, with all the higher religions; there is also much overlapping and common ground between them. The Buddha, for example, broke off from Hinduism but not from its doctrine of karma and transmigration, or from its asceticism. It might thus appear that we could list a few of the most important tenets and indicate what Christianity has to say to those who hold each of them. But the groupings of the tenets and the addition of new ones make such variations that the

<sup>1</sup> *World Mission of Christianity*, 1928, p. 15.



adherent of one religion feels very differently from the adherent of the others, and we must commend the good news to each with a different emphasis. All the same, if we here speak of pantheism or karma under the heading of one religion there is no need to deal with it again under another.

This is not a book on the study of world religions. It assumes the main body of knowledge which such study has accumulated, and borrows its help for evangelism, in the spirit of the above quotation. We are not attempting to give any adequate or balanced account of the whole teaching or practice of Hinduism or any other religion. What Christianity has to say to the adherents of these religions is here our only concern.

A few years ago an impression spread abroad that the days of the older eastern religions were numbered. Scientific agnosticism, materialistic determinism, political fascism or communism were said to be doing their corrosive work, and Christianity might, for all practical purposes, ignore the incapacitated ancient faiths.<sup>1</sup> Missionaries in general were less sure, and the experience of recent years has strengthened their doubts. There have been revivals of Buddhism in China and Japan, of some forms of Hinduism in India, and of the Confucian ethic, albeit mingled, for example in the "New Life Movement," with other views of the world. Indeed we should be sorry to find that faiths which whatever their weaknesses comforted and upheld human millions through the vicissitudes of the centuries went down rapidly before the advent of the modern western idols. Our task in spreading the

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., *Roads to the City of God*, p. 33, B. Matthews, 1928.

gospel would not thereby be made easier. We have seen above (Chapters IV and V) in the ethnic religions rays of the shining of the divine Word; it will not be easier to tell of the Word made flesh to those for whom they have been extinguished. We should grieve to see partial lights put out except in the way that stars are put out at sunrise. Our approach to the eastern religions is reverential and sympathetic; in the general contest with material and atheism they are our allies.

There is nevertheless some ground for the exaggerated impression of their precarious condition, in the enormous and unforeseen progress in our own generation of national and political fervours such as communism or fascism, which have largely usurped the place of religion among youth, even more in the East than in the West. The modern missionary must know what Christianity can say to these pseudo-religions. Fortunately he can find much help in the literature which is pouring from the presses in the "sending" countries. We therefore omit the study of them here, only noting that the missionary must meet them fairly by showing that Christ can more truly satisfy the needs which have given rise to them, in fact that at their best they dimly prophesy, as do the religions of the world, something which will be realized in the Kingdom of God.

Of the many manifestations of multiformed Hinduism the Advaita, or "One without a second" system, may be taken as most characteristic. More than any other country India has persisted in asking the question What is Reality, and prayed the noble prayer, first composed when some of our prophetic books were being written :

“ From the unreal lead me to the real !  
 From darkness lead me to light !  
 From death lead me to immortality ! ”

(*Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, i, 3, 28.)

Perhaps the conditions of life in a land where disease and death smite swiftly, and nature though lavish of its benefits is also terrifying, have deepened and intensified that sense of life's impermanence which comes to us all in certain moods. Even Christians in the West sing in hymns “ Our life is but a fading dream ” and “ Change and decay in all around I see.” But in India men feel their souls darkened and enslaved by this impermanence, which is supposed to be due to a mysterious something (*māyā*, only partly translatable as “ illusion ”) which makes the unreal seem real. Deliverance from this something is life's most pressing problem—release from the unreal. There is only one reality, the eternal unchangeable behind all difference and change, *Brāhmā*, which cannot be known by those who live in the changing world dominated by *māyā*. All that can be said of *Brāhmā*, is “ Not this, not that ”; “ Not personal, not impersonal ”; “ Not good, not evil ”; for it is beyond all such categories. The way to attain *Brāhmā* is by knowledge, or austerity, or good works. The highest state men can attain is when the senses, mind, intellect, do not move, all desires in the heart cease, all attachments are cut, and the individual is *joined* to or absorbed in the universal.

Here are relevant to the missionary purpose all the considerations which lead philosophers and religious men to theism rather than to pantheism. Relevant also is the history of the practical working out of

these systems in human life. The term pantheism has sometimes been used of the thought of Christian mystics or poets,<sup>1</sup> but real logical pantheism, which is a very different matter, has been best demonstrated in India, where its effects can be studied, and they do not recommend it. There it is no "praeparatio evangelica," but cotton-wool in the ears when the Gospel is spoken.

Yet in love for the pantheist taking his system at its best, sharing his feeling so far as may be, we can see a bridge across which he can be led to Christian thinking. When he says "I am Brāhmā" he is using extravagant language such as even Christian mystics have sometimes employed, and it is fair to interpret him as impatiently ignoring human limitations in his passion for oneness with God. When he says that the one reality is unknowable, we may take him to mean that it is too wonderful for our finite minds to grasp, even as we ourselves say that God is far beyond our power fully to comprehend, which is one reason why we worship Him. When he says "Not this, not that," we recall the fondness of some Christians for the phrase "Wholly other" applied to God. We agree that nothing is so real as God, the one ground of all existence. We agree that man by searching could never find Him out; all that we know of Him is by revelation through His condescending grace. We notice the commendable inconsistency whereby Hindus, after insisting that reality is unknowable, go on to speak of the same reality in manifestation, that is as known, through some admixture of Māyā (illusion) or Avidyā (ignorance). This manifested reality becomes

<sup>1</sup> See Tennyson's poem, "The Higher Pantheism."

a personal God, whom men can worship under many forms. Thus clearly does the Hindu heart show that no soul can live by abstractions. After propounding a philosophy of the one unknowable reality which should make religion impossible, it has surpassed all other lands in devotion to religion. Herein appears the deep human hunger for that which only the Incarnation can supply.

Unfortunately the many stories of God-in-manifestation, whether they be Saivite theophanies or Vaishnavite Avatars, are haunted by the sense of a partial unreality. At any moment the disguised divine may disappear, merged again in the One or the All. That is why the bravest spirits long to press on past their favourite deity to Brāhmā, and often affirm their indifference to ordinary religion. Religion after all is second-class; the only first-class attainment is to be merged in the One. "Just think of a shoreless ocean—an infinite expanse of water—no land visible in any direction; only here and there are visible blocks of ice formed by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to say, of the deep devotion of his worshipper, the Infinite reduces Himself into the finite and appears before him as a being with form. Again, as on the appearance of the sun the ice melts away, so on the appearance of the sun of knowledge God with form melts away into the formless."<sup>1</sup> But the human longing for knowledge of God is too fierce and too continuous to be satisfied with temporary concessions to pious feelings which with greater understanding melt away.

The Avatars are not incarnations (as the term has

<sup>1</sup> Words of Sri Rāmakrishna,

been mis-translated) but descents of the divine into the human, or even the sub-human, involving no real assumption of a human nature, even when, as in the stories of Rāma or Krishna, the human form is worn for years together. The whole eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita was written as a reminder that Krishna the charioteer was only one of the innumerable forms under which the divine is disguised from human eyes. But in the purpose which inspired the descents, usually some beneficent saving intention towards creatures in distress, we read the human longing for a divine helper which crops up here and there in the religious literature of all the world, the unconscious prophecy which is only fulfilled in the one incarnation for man's salvation. "Whenever there is decay of righteousness, and exaltation of unrighteousness, then I myself come forth; for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age."<sup>1</sup> Here it is assumed that the protection of the good can only be by the destruction of evil doers; only by being Judge can God be Saviour. But as commonly understood—and the words are amongst the best-known in all Indian literature—they denote a saving purpose. Those who value them should not find it difficult to notice the similarity but also the vital difference in the words: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."<sup>2</sup> "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost."<sup>3</sup>

Eternity, infinity, unity, inwardness, these great

<sup>1</sup> Bhagavad-Gita, IV, 7 and 8.

<sup>2</sup> John xii, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xix, 10.

words denote something which must mark true religion, and it is India's glory to have produced so many who sought for these things, which we vaguely speak of as the mystical elements in religion. Not finding them in the popular forms of worship, or in the Dravidian religion, they constructed out of these conceptions a religious philosophy. They soared as high as the human mind can rise without revelation, but such a system remains unsatisfying as long as nothing positive can be said of the reality to which the soul aspires. The answer to their need must be in history, which they tend to despise as meaningless. In the mighty acts of God which centred in the manifestation of Jesus, reality has become known by man, with a knowledge genuine though partial. So all the stories within the Bible, most of all the great story of progressive revelation which runs right through it, help to make reality personal, until as the fog clears away the glory of God is seen shining in the face of Jesus Christ. He who has seen Jesus has seen, so far as men may see, the ultimate reality, the absolute, God the Father, and these are one and the same.<sup>1</sup> If Christianity were only, as sometimes represented, a moral life lived according to the precepts of a teacher of long ago, it would not satisfy the Hindu. But the Christian theological interpretation of God, the world, and eternity is deep enough, the life hid with Christ in God is inward enough, the experience of the saints has in it heights and depths enough, to satisfy the need which created Hindu mysticism.

That does not mean that the Hindu necessarily welcomes the message. Our stories seem to him

<sup>1</sup> Cf. B. H. Streeter, *The Buddha and the Christ*, p. 167.

childish or mythological, and he looks down upon our "anthropomorphic" speech about God. We can bear this in patience if we are clear, as Christians should be, that only such speech is appropriate. In talking of God as personal, we are not assuming that personality in Him is just the same as it is with us who experience it in all kinds of limitation, such as its association with bodies five or six feet long. But where all language must necessarily be symbolic, the better symbol of ultimate reality is not vague negatives or philosophic abstractions, but terms appropriate to that which has mind, heart, will, in other words to living men; men are more like God than mists. Even when there is no opportunity to reason this out, the simple story sometimes produces its effect all unnoticed. And while there is need for exposition of the full Christian philosophy, it is the facts of the Christian history which need most constant repetition.

We have seen in the doctrine of God-in-manifestation that human hunger for a personal divine which the historical incarnation satisfies. There is a yet more striking proof that the human soul cannot feed on dry abstractions, in the prominence during the greater part of Indian religious history of 'bhakti', or religious devotion offered to a personal deity, with every degree of intensity of religious emotion. Feeling, as well as intellect and will, must find scope in any great religion. So the same Indians who point to the Advaita as the summit of Indian thought, often point to bhakti as the summit of Indian religious feeling. "Bhakti is faith, filled with love, expressing itself in reverence."<sup>1</sup> The object of this

<sup>1</sup> Otto, *India's Religion of Grace*, p. 55.



devotion may be Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita or the morally inferior Krishna of the stories about his doings with milk-maids; it may be Siva in his theophanies, or often an actual stone image treated as a living being. It almost seems to matter little what is the object, so long as it stirs up passionate emotion, which may lead to swooning and trances. If man has not a being worthy to stir up his deepest religious sentiments he will make one; that is written large across the story of Indian religions.

To us it must seem that all this intensity is too good for its traditional objects. Such passionate self-abandonment can by rights be directed to one alone, God manifest in human life, loving men to the uttermost, and calling out their unbounded love in return. The absolute may be worthy of homage, but is too cold for love. "The love towards God, that for Christ is the heart of religion, is impossible to anyone who conceives Reality as an impersonal absolute."<sup>1</sup>

By being rooted in Christian history mysticism is safeguarded against that pantheism into which in India it degenerates. The true satisfaction of the needs which gave rise to the mysticism of the Advaita lies in abiding in Christ. Christian history centres around one whom to believe is to have, even in the midst of time, life eternal. That is the final boon to man who feels himself to be as momentary as a wavelet upon the great deep.

But the quest for reality does not exhaust Hindu aspirations; there is also the quest for a key to the mystery of life's unequal apportionment of suffering. "What did I do in a former birth to deserve this?"

<sup>1</sup> Streeter, *The Buddha and the Christ*, p. 165.

is the first thought, when trouble comes, to spring up in the mind of millions of people in Asia, not only Hindus, but Buddhists, and others influenced by Indian culture. If, as we have seen, the most characteristic Indian thought on religion and philosophy is the Advaita, the most characteristic Indian thought on life and conduct is the teaching on karma and transmigration. Souls are born and die many times; conduct in one life determines the nature of the next, good conduct being rewarded by a rise in the scale of being, evil being punished by a descent. Karma, which strictly means simply "doing" or "thing done," has come to mean a process by which automatically all action works out its results in either this life or some other. A man's body (strong or deformed), mind (penetrating or feeble), circumstances (rich or poor) are the direct consequence of the total good or bad balance of his doings in many lives, human, sub-human, or super-human. If he is a rich Brahman the balance must be strong on the credit side; if a leper and an outcaste, that is an index of horrible crimes of which he *must* have been guilty. If we could stop acting, we should stop this chain of consequences, this procession, or rather endlessly revolving wheel of births and deaths. So long as we do either good or bad, it must continue to turn.

Imagine that the lines "Though the mills of God grind slowly yet they grind exceeding small" were not metaphorical, but alluded to a real mechanism. When you have done either right or wrong you have as it were put your coin in the slot of an automatic machine, which will deliver the result with utter disregard for your feelings. The mechanism

works not through one life but through many; gods and demons as well as men are entangled in it. It is as irresistible as fate, and in popular speech the terms for karma and for fate are often interchanged.

This theory gave some rest for the mind which was tormented by the question why there are such appalling inequalities in our experience, one person born in a slum, another in a palace; one having every encouragement to the good life, another handicapped from birth onwards. These things look unfair, but the karma theory shows them just. It makes possible belief in some kind of a moral order. It is a deterrent against evil, because punishment cannot be evaded. And in suffering it acts as an anodyne; for the sufferer knows that his pain is not without cause, and must ultimately come to an end when his karma is worked through.

On the other hand, this doctrine is pessimistic; eastern literature is steeped in longing for escape from the dreary prospect of "death bringing births endlessly forlorn," or release from the turning of the wheel. The sinner may never hope for forgiveness. Whereas defenders of the doctrine claim that it is a means of moral education, this claim cannot be upheld, because not knowing what we did in previous lives, we are being punished or rewarded for we know not what. Any educational value in a system of rewards and punishments depends upon their being clearly explained to the person being educated. The springs of natural human sympathy at sight of suffering dry up when it is believed to be the just reward of offences committed. It becomes possible for kind-hearted Indians to regard widows or out-

castes in the same light as prisoners justly serving their sentence.

The history of this way of thinking is interesting. The earliest Aryans did not know it, for there is no trace of it in the Rig-Veda, whereas in the Upanishads it is firmly established. It was unknown to the Dravidians. Hence the Aryan attitude to life, somewhere between 1000 and 500 B.C., must have undergone in producing it a change to which there is no parallel in other religions, from sunshine to sadness. The doctrine of transmigration is found elsewhere, but it is not regarded as a result of conduct.

During the same centuries and those which followed, the Hebrews were being guided by the prophets through national experiences not entirely dissimilar to those of the Aryans, with the same intuition of a connection between the moral quality of acts and their rewards and punishments in life. But they thought of only one life, lived under the direct control of God. Since God is merciful, there must be some possibility of forgiveness. How God could forgive and likewise be just was a problem to which no clear or final solution was at hand. But on this problem even more than most, the death and resurrection of Jesus shed new light, and made possible the message to sinners, Be ye reconciled to God, which is the Christian answer to the karma and transmigration theory. To the believers in karma, the offer of free forgiveness at first sounds unethical as if it ignored the moral consequences of sin, and must therefore be untrue. The more necessary is it for the preacher to make clear the meaning of the Christian atonement, which instead of treating sin

lightly as is supposed, sees no hope but in the suffering unto death of the God-man.<sup>1</sup> Along some such lines as the following it has been proved possible for Christians to explain their own faith to those who hold the karmic theory.

The doctrine of karma is an exaggeration of a real truth, that we reap as we sow, since this is a moral universe, in which acts have consequences, which cannot be escaped, though by new factors they may be transformed. We start from this common ground.

But the consequences are not to ourselves alone, but to those who love us, to society and in some measure to the whole of humanity. Karma doctrine does not go far enough, for it does not take account of social solidarity. It is utterly individualistic; each lonely individual drees his own weird, unaffected by those around him, passing through his many histories without interaction with theirs. Yet few things are clearer to-day than that our own acts have consequences for others, whether we will it or no; and the acts of others affect us, so that we are all bound together in the bundle of life, helped or hindered by each other's moral victories or defeats. It is not the least of the ways in which Hinduism is inadequate to modern life, that it can offer no doctrinal foundation for religious society. It has no church, no fellowship of believers.

The Jews found out even before Christ that there can be such a thing as voluntary vicarious suffering undertaken out of love. Not all suffering is the punishment of earlier evil done by the sufferer; he

<sup>1</sup> For a full study of the implications alike of the karma theory and of the Christian doctrine of redemption, see A. G. Hogg, *Karma and Redemption* (1909).

may be incurring it of his own free will to help some other on whom he has compassion. The suffering which a mother willingly endures to save an erring child could be escaped if she were careless, that is to say morally inferior. It cannot be karmic suffering, for it is a consequence of goodness. Yet her very love so identifies her with her child that she makes her own his karma and its results. She is exemplifying a law of moral experience at its higher levels. The self-identification of the pure with the impure by love draws upon the pure the consequences of the other's impurity. And that voluntary self-identification with the other in suffering, undertaken out of love, proves in actual experience to be the most potent of all redemptive forces.

The supreme instance is in the cross. He who was God and was sinless, by love so identified Himself with us all as to accept, be involved in, the consequences of our sin. He "stood in" with men so closely that the results of men's wickedness must inevitably fall upon His head. Had He kept a little away from us, not been Son of Man but some being on a superhuman height, flinging down directions for us below to follow if we could, there would have been for Him no cross and for us no salvation. The term karma in Hindu usage applies only to the conduct of the individual and its results. But the facts of moral life require that it should be extended; there is such a thing as family karma, national karma, race karma. Jesus so made Himself one with humanity that He took upon Himself its collective race karma, and in His suffering worked it out. By the self-same act He accepted and ended our karma, broke our resisting evil hearts, and redeemed

us, so that we could start a new moral life in the atmosphere of His forgiving grace.

The only escape Hinduism can offer from the round of births and deaths is by one of three ways—knowledge, devotion, good works, all extremely difficult, uncertain and vague in their promise of result. True knowledge of God, the self-abandonment of true devotion, the dynamic for doing good, come in their fulness to those who have seen Jesus nailed to the cross for their sin.

To him who is crushed between the cogwheels of a relentless moral machinery the Gospel shows a loving divine Person who died on the cross for the sin of the world. And when he abandons hope of saving himself and casts himself upon the love of the divine Redeemer, he is given a living Spirit to be in him the source of a good hitherto impossible. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit equally with that of the cross supplies richly the need of those whom life's experience of acts and their consequences had deprived of hope. "Unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."<sup>1</sup>

We spoke above of a change from the sunshine of the Vedas to the shadow of the Upanishads. The sense of life as a calamity, of the body as a burden, of experience as futile or evil, settled permanently as a weight on the human spirit. It was so much taken for granted by the Buddha that he never thought of challenging it, and the gloom which originated in

<sup>1</sup> Jude, 24 and 24.

India darkens life throughout many eastern lands. Christians who go there discover that our doctrine of Creation is also a part of the Gospel. "In the beginning God created . . . and behold it was very good."<sup>1</sup> Our recognition of mythological elements in the Genesis story has in no way altered its joyful truth, that life and all creatures originate in God whose works are good, whatever we may afterwards make of them. The lovely old windows in cathedrals, showing God in brilliant-hued garments making green trees and flying birds, and then man and woman, are proclaiming a truth for which oriental millions are waiting. The universe is no lonely place of terrors, but a family home which God made for us to live in with Him.

This contrasted view of life makes contrasted views of asceticism. If life is a calamity the saint who has perceived this will reduce it to a minimum. There are still occasional instances of the earlier notion regarding ascetic practice as a means of gaining supernatural power to force even the gods to do one's will. But the ordinary aim is to minimize this illusory existence in order to become merged in the one and only Being. The body is a rotting, foul cage of the spirit, and is treated accordingly, with results sometimes unfavourable to what we call moral hygiene. There is a constant withdrawal from society of the best souls whom it badly needs. And since real asceticism is easily parodied, Indian society is troubled with a host of pretenders to the "holy" life who are a serious economic burden on the population. Consequently while we must ever admire the ardour to be rid of bodily weights, and

<sup>1</sup> Gen., i, 1 and 31.



the courage in enduring suffering, which have inspired asceticism at its best, we seek to modify it by changing the conception of life and the body from which it sprang.

In the course of Christian history there has been asceticism which grew out of the same soil, an idea of the essential evil of matter and of the body, which had been caught like an infection from later Greek philosophy, which in turn possibly was influenced by Indian thought. But it was untrue to the Christian genius, and has been abandoned. There is room for a Christian "askesis," an exercising of body, mind and spirit which keeps each constituent of personality in its proper place and fitted for its maximum contribution to the whole. But its aim, instead of being the minimizing of life as an illusion or as evil, is the perfecting of all its parts, so that there may be no blemish in that which, having been received from the good hand of God, is offered up to Him again in gratitude for all His benefits.

## CHAPTER X

### PAIN AND PEACE: THE GOSPEL AND BUDDHISM

A VAST number of people are Buddhists—a recent estimate is a hundred and fifty millions—and among them are many sects and differing doctrines, the chief demarcation being between the southern Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma and Assam, and the northern Buddhists in countries further east. Our aim is simply to show a few things which must form part of our message to Buddhists anywhere. Some part of what the Christian must say when explaining himself to the Buddhist has been already set down, being the same as what must be said to the Hindu. But the Buddha's whole career began with his concern regarding human pain. All the world has heard the great story of his renunciation, which had as its purpose the discovery of a way of deliverance from human suffering.

We too in these days are heavily burdened by the problem of pain; many people are more distressed about suffering than about sin; the Buddha seems in many ways very modern. But what we call the *problem* of pain did not exist for him. We are puzzled that in a world created by a good God there should be so much misery. To the Buddha with the ordinary notions of his day regarding life and the body, karma and transmigration, there was no problem in the fact of suffering, but only the problem of discovery of a way of deliverance from it; the

agonizing question was not Why suffering—in such a world suffering was natural—but, How get freedom from it?

Metaphysical problems did not interest him, and it is curious that while there is much speculation in Buddhist literature, and difficult books have had to be written on Buddhist philosophy, there is a clear tradition that the Buddha himself refused to discuss questions of merely theoretical interest. He believed himself to have found the practical way out of misery, not through mortification nor by speculation, but by the enlightenment which came to him in meditation. In meditation he had attained the consummate peace of Nirvana, which is free from sorrow or decay, from action or rebirth. He had discovered a moral and psychological system which ended pain, which might mean for him even immediate emancipation from life itself. At first he felt hopeless about communicating the discovery to others, and was tempted simply to enter upon his own new-found freedom; but he decided in love for humanity to re-enter the sorrowful world and let his new light shine. As has been truly said, his consent to live, as Christ's consent to die, was for mankind.<sup>1</sup>

We have a summary of his teachings in the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths, which traditionally form the substance of his first discourse after enlightenment. These truths are: first, suffering—birth is sorrowful; and decay, illness, death, separation, craving for what cannot be ob-

<sup>1</sup> For our practical purpose it is not necessary to enter upon the difficult questions concerning the historicity of the story of the Buddha's renunciation, of his subsequent life and teaching, or of the experience of his disciples. The above may serve as an account of what the average intelligent Buddhist believes, and the Christian has to explain his message to Buddhists as believing.

tained, in fact all the states of the mind which co-exist with conscious individuality, are sorrowful. Second, the cause of suffering is the action of the outside world on the senses, exciting in them a "thirst" or craving for pleasure, which in turn causes re-birth. Third is the truth that the ending of this "thirst," this eager lust of living, is the means to end sorrow. Fourth is the truth that the way which leads to the cessation of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path. It is otherwise called the Middle Path, apparently because it lay midway between ordinary sensual life and the excessive mortification practised by the Hindu ascetics of the time. It deals with 1. right belief, 2. right aims, 3. right speech, 4. right actions, 5. right means of livelihood, 6. right endeavour, 7. right mindfulness, 8. right meditation.

In short, to end suffering we must end desire. To end desire we must live in pursuit of wisdom and character, giving ourselves to contemplation. Buddhist art and sculpture convey the essential message more clearly than do the scriptures. The Buddha sits in a lofty peace, withdrawn from gazing on the world, yet with some kindly suggestion of invitation to come and share the calm which his wisdom has secured. Here we do not stay to dwell upon the gracious character of Gautama, the lofty ethics of some of the teaching, the questions of history which are involved, or the remarkable changes which came over Buddhism as it travelled further eastward. We only note that the remedy for suffering can hardly satisfy modern humanity. For to end pain in this way is to end life. Whatever conclusions scholarship may reach regarding the

meaning of the term Nirvana as first used by the Buddha—and he himself seems to have refused to define it—the extinction of desire for good as well as for evil must logically involve the virtual extinction of personality. It is not open to us to escape from suffering by escaping life. Moreover if our own unaided efforts are to produce right aims, right speech and right action, we are back in the region of despair which St. Paul knew so well in the effort after fulfilment of the law by good works.

Then what remedy for pain has the Gospel to offer? First, it brings in God. We can well understand that the Brāhmā of the philosophers in Gautama's day seemed irrelevant to this problem, so was ignored by him. But the living God of the Jews and Christians, who is afflicted in all the afflictions of His children, carrying them all the days, and whose Fatherhood was set forth by Jesus, Himself made perfect through suffering, is not merely relevant to the problem of pain, but makes all the difference to the feeling of the sufferer. That God can suffer, even by sympathy, is at first a startling thought to easterners, as it was once to some Christian theologians, but accepted it means that the sufferer is no longer lonely but has ground for hope. As he looks at God incarnate in Jesus, and reads in the gospels how Jesus dealt with human sorrows, the hope grows stronger.

How the sorrowing human heart needs a divine person to comprehend and help it is strikingly shown by the later story of Buddhism itself. As it went East it developed a belief in helpers and saviours, chief of them Amida or Amitabhā, who is worshipped in China and Japan as lord of a western

paradise, a heaven of everlasting bliss to which he will convey those who call upon his name. This dream of a Saviour resembles Christian doctrine so closely that some historical connection has been suspected, but there is no evidence. It is one of the many instances in the history of religion of human aspiration after what is divinely given in the Christian revelation. Streeter has happily in this connection quoted Mrs. Browning's lines, themselves having quite another reference, ending with the words "God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame." The best dream of Mahayana Buddhism pales before the historical reality of God manifest in the flesh for us men and our salvation.

Next, the whole debate on suffering which runs through the Old Testament and is continued in the New brings out the fact that while in itself it is an evil, causing depression and degeneration, and deserving all that the Buddha felt about it, certain reactions to it can change its effect to that of the refining fire upon gold mingled with dross. There is no necessary connection between holiness and suffering, yet Christian history is rich in examples of those who attained great holiness through suffering, accepted as the inscrutable but benevolent will of God, or voluntarily incurred for the sake of helping others. Jesus bids disciples take up their cross and follow Him. St. Paul thinks the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. The writer to the Hebrews insists on the value of suffering as discipline. The Book of Revelation shows white-robed in glory those who came out of great tribulation. Suffering in the New Testament reveals new

potentialities; in itself it is dark as ever, but a strange transfiguring light from the cross of Christ shines through it.

That is because the New Testament brings healing to a human disease even more deep-rooted, which is sin. That which does away with sin does away at the same time with the very large part of suffering which it causes, and what is left can be turned into a discipline of purification. Here we recall what was said above about karma and the suffering voluntarily undertaken by the sinless One, who accepted the consequences of sin and ended them. The story of the crucifixion as a revelation of the love of God is the deepest word that can be said about suffering, human or divine. It speaks peace deeper than could be attained by flight from the world to men who must continue to live amid its pain. The contemplation which Buddhism rightly extols has an objective content. Instead of meditating upon the inevitability of human misery the saint gazes at the cross of Christ.

We must end desire. Not all desire, else we should end life, but the low desire in which the Buddha and the New Testament alike find the cause of every sort of evil. Low desire is ended by the high passion of devotion stirred in every sinner who has seen his Lord suffering for his sake upon the cross. We must live in the pursuit of wisdom and character, but our own strength fails, and we are given, as we follow Jesus in trust and obedience, His own Spirit of wisdom and purity. Under that Spirit's influence our immature faith comes to abound unto knowledge. So the qualities for which the Buddhist has striven with such costly ardour are bountifully supplied to faith.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you,"<sup>1</sup> said Jesus. The Buddha pointed out the road to the peace of Nirvana. It is easy to show which gift is richer. But it must be confessed that in days of anxiety, hurry and stress we Christians often fail to demonstrate it in our lives. That lost tranquillity has to come back to Christian society, and that lost serenity to the Christian countenance, before we can attract those who in their measure have attained it without the help available to us.

It is convenient at this point to say a word about the much discussed world-affirmation said to be characteristic of Christianity and the world-denial said to be characteristic of several eastern faiths.

Hindu and Buddhist ethics have always tended to be world-denying. How could it be otherwise when the very existence of the world rests upon illusion or ignorance? It is true that modern exponents give their teaching a this-worldly reference, and Hindus can point to the Bhagavad-Gita which combines renunciation of desire with the doing of the duty proper to one's own station in this life; action without attachment is the ideal. Up-to-date controversialists even carry the war into the Christian camp by pointing to the apocalyptic New Testament passages which suggested an impending catastrophic end of the world, or to the hermits and ascetics of later Christian history. We need not fear controversy upon such issues, but it is less important to examine what each religion has taught at particular periods in its history than to note the tacit assumption that any religion for modern humanity must have some good news about the world in which it must live.

<sup>1</sup> John xiv, 27.



Jesus' own attitude to this world stands in no doubt. It was created by our heavenly Father, who arrayed the lilies in splendour beyond Solomon's. Nor can anyone doubt that He lived simultaneously in the larger unseen world, of whose many abiding places this is only one; nor that He was ready to leave one for the other at His Father's call. But what did He mean by requiring men who followed Him to take up their cross? Manichees, perhaps influenced by the Persian belief in an evil power alongside of God,<sup>1</sup> took Him to mean renunciation of marriage and of the pleasures of social intercourse, fasting and seclusion from the world's affairs. The Church at large said No, and gradually has disentangled itself from these and all similar notions and practices which are based on the world being essentially evil. Jesus meant "Accept the consequences of serving me whatever they may be, even though they involve a shameful death." The service may be rendered to the Church which is His body, or to the world for His sake, but things being as they are in this life, it always entails some suffering. If that should be of such intensity that the word "Cross" is applicable, the follower of Christ will not refuse it. So the Christian says No to the service of self, and Yes to the costly service of his Lord, and is both world-denying and world-affirming. In practical experience he has no difficulty in solving the merely apparent contradiction between two New Testament texts—"Love not the world" and "God so loved the world."

<sup>1</sup> Burkitt, *Religion of the Manichees*, doubts the hitherto-accepted theory of Persian influence.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE VERY IMAGE OF THE DIVINE SUBSTANCE

THERE remain many other expressions of human religious feeling which must be understood by any bearer of the good news that God has been revealed in the history which centres in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How is that message relevant to the worshipper of images, or to the Parsees and Muhammedans who eschew images? What has it to say to the Confucian whose system is more ethic than religion, and to men everywhere whose chief concern is the moral life? There are whole books on the relation of Christianity to Zoroastrianism, Islam and Confucianism, whose contents need not be repeated here. Our task is merely to show that the Christian history of God coming to earth is the precise answer to the needs which these systems have tried to meet. That which unlocks so many doors must surely be the master-key to all.

First let us think of the worship of images in several faiths. Because this naturally catches the eye of the visitor to eastern countries it has perhaps bulked too largely in his thoughts of the religions practised there. This may be the reason for a certain sensitiveness on the part of orientals who fiercely resent classical references to the heathen in his blindness bowing down to wood and stone, and even deny that he is doing anything of the sort. He is using a symbol for the purpose of mental concentration, which is really fixed on the invisible divine;

or he is doing what the rest of us do when we deliberately look at a photograph in order to set in motion a train of thought. This is almost certainly ascribing to multitudes of illiterate people thought processes which belong to the well-educated minority, but controversy on the subject is barren. There is an interesting field for research into iconography, with the reasons why such and such images have come to be made, and into the psychology of the use of images by various groups of people.

We Christians have our roots in a religion which forbade representations of the divine, and by easterners are naturally considered to be prejudiced. With the best will in the world to be sympathetic, we cannot discover that idolatry has a good record in religion. The presentation of deity in a form too closely resembling the human has often opened the sluice-gate to lower physical cravings. The association of sensual immorality with religion seems to be closest in those places where images, male and female, have been most prominently used. There was some literal truth in the denunciation by Hebrew prophets of the practice of "going a-whoring" after other gods. And if their language be fierce, it must be remembered that it was being addressed to people who had known more spiritual worship and were forsaking it. The same fact justifies the use of the other weapon of raillery against idols so prominent in the Old Testament.

Their situation is not ours, when we go with a new message to people whose ancestral religion is all connected with sacred images. Only rarely is either denunciation or raillery permissible in our day. But we have a clear and constructive message for the

idolater. We say that it is a true religious instinct which forbade him to rest content with vague and misty notions of the divine, and made him seek something visible, tangible, definite. The soul cannot feed on negatives, the inscrutable or infinite or quality-less.

But the image must suggest truth, not untruth, about God; any hint of ugliness or impurity makes it deceitful and dangerous. And the best things which mankind everywhere desires to find in God are singularly difficult to embody in dead matter of any sort. Truth, purity, love, all the best qualities are such as can only be incarnated in life—in short, only living persons can in some measure image forth the divine. And only a perfect person could do it adequately. But it has been done. So we come to the telling of the story of that human life which whoever has seen has seen the Father. We recall that more than once in the New Testament Jesus is called the image of God.<sup>1</sup> He is the final satisfaction of that in man which has caused him to set up all his images.

This is no tour-de-force or artificial verbal logic. The vagueness and uncertainty which we have seen shadowing everywhere man's gropings after God produced images by a process of wishful thinking. Polytheism under the influence of culture has always faded into the mists, and even monotheism has done the same when not sustained by the special historic revelation which centres in Christ. Humanity could not do without a concrete representation of God, but has it in the perfect divine-human life of Jesus. That is the Gospel.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv, 4, Col. i, 15, cf. Heb. i, 3.

Even monotheism has faded out. We saw it in the case of the Egyptian Ikhnatōn near the time of Moses. The contemporary instance is in the religion of the Parsees, originating in the teacher Zarathushtra or Zoroaster, whose traditional date is between 660 and 583 B.C.<sup>1</sup> It was a blossom-time in human history, when a single period round about 600 B.C. saw the appearance of Laò-tse and Confucius in China, of the Buddha in India, of the greatest prophets in Israel, and away in Persia of this solitary beacon-light of the truth of one God who is opposed to all evil. Yet the subsequent history of Zoroastrianism<sup>2</sup> shows lapse into polytheism. As was shown above (Chapter IV) nothing but the mighty acts of God centring in the incarnation could fix the stupendous truth of the one holy God in the minds of men.

The mention of Zoroastrianism recalls also the dualism which is commonly associated with Persian religion. Is there an eternal evil just as there is in God eternal good? Zoroaster seems to have said there is, and although Dr. Moulton defends him against the charge of dualism, it is clear that later Persian religion gave an unhealthy prominence to the power of evil. Christianity too has its devil, but he is not an independent or creative spirit. "The theoretic difference between the Parsi and Christian doctrine would be that in the former God *cannot* "kill debbil" until the time, in the latter He *will* not, but determines to destroy evil not by force but by love."<sup>3</sup> But if God *cannot* "kill debbil" we are shut up to an attitude of cosmic defeatism; good

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moulton thought it should be several centuries earlier.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Treasure of the Magi*, J. H. Moulton, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

cannot overcome evil and our state is hopeless. It is this feeling which has saddened far too many of the best people in the East. At one time it made a deep mark, through the earliest Christian ascetics in Egypt, upon our own religion. The true answer, made by the Christian story itself, is that while evil is a power too great for us, and so terrible as to involve for the perfect Man the suffering of the cross, it is nevertheless conquered, and in the Lord we can combat it with the certainty of ultimate victory.

We turn now to the other and greater monotheistic religion, Islam, which stubbornly opposes the Christian advance in a large part of the world. At first sight the position appears different from any other in that the Prophet knew something of Judaism and Christianity and felt his own revelation to be the completion of both. Islam appears to know the Christian history and to find greater value in its own. And relationships still suffer from the dreadful heritage of war, especially of the Crusades, and of fanaticism on both sides in earlier centuries.

But Muhammed's familiarity with certain Jewish and Christian names did not mean that he knew as much as the use of those names might suggest. The Christians he knew were not modern instructed Protestants who read their Bible, and Muhammed's impressions from intercourse with them represent a distorted reflection of a distortion. Since Muhammedans to-day are still bound to regard whatever differs from the Kurān as due to corruption of Scripture, they are in a similar position to some westerners who have never read the Bible, but have seen highly incorrect allusions to Bible personages in works of fiction. The more the ancient enmities

between the two religions are cleared away, the clearer does it become that the essential relationship between Christianity and Islam is similar to that between it and the other faiths. The Christian story is exactly what Islam needs.

Muhammed not only taught monotheism, like Zoroaster and other great ones already mentioned, but held it with a supreme and violent passion which still marks his followers. That very passion defeated itself, because in his concern for the transcendence and almightiness of Allah he conceived Him as inscrutable Will, which for practical purposes is as deficient as the Hindu conception of unknowable Being. True, God had dictated to the Prophet certain syllables which must never be changed, but that did not bring about any communion of the ordinary worshipper with Him. A revelation through words once for all dictated, as compared with a revelation through divine acts during a continuous history, leaves God unknown save in the limited range of knowledge which the dictated words can communicate.<sup>1</sup> Islamic theology has insisted, in its desire to exalt God, that words commonly used of Him, such as compassionate, or wise, or merciful, cannot have the same meaning as when used of man. But that leaves man after all with a God whom he cannot comprehend, and the extremes of Hinduism and Islam have met. The evangelist's function once again is to declare God who is worshipped but not known. Here in Islam men are praying to a

<sup>1</sup> This account has in mind ordinary, orthodox Islam, the religion of the vast majority. It would not be true of certain of the sects, particularly of the Sufis, whose philosophy is pantheistic. To Sufi mystics the essential Christian message must be the same as to Hindu mystics, see above page 140.

God too exalted to be understood, with a humble desire to submit to His commands. And here is Jesus, making God understandable, and the understanding of Him calls forth the same obedience, but it is now the obedience of a child to its parent, not of a slave to a hidden power. God in the teaching of Jesus is as majestic as in Islam, but His majesty is welded into a miraculous compound with His intimate fatherly love.

Missions to Muhammedans must have their own special method and approach, conditioned by the sad story of the earlier contacts between the two faiths, as well as by the need for Islamic scholarship. They demand a special resoluteness and faith, as well as the special continuity of support from the Christian Church which they have rarely had in the past. They appear to confront the most difficult task in the whole field of world evangelism, though the thousands of converts from Islam in the East Indies show that the task is not impossible. But their message to Muhammedans is the same as to the idolaters whom those so fiercely denounce, namely that the one invisible God has been set forth, placarded before the eyes of men, in Jesus who died for our sins and rose for our salvation.

Finally, as we turn to think of what the Christian revelation has to say to the Confucian, we note that the story which makes God concrete and approachable does the same thing for the moral ideal which the nature of God determines. In Jesus, divine and human, man sees at last the perfection which his own life should attain, and is given the power for its attainment.

Every religion has its moral ideal, but the system



of Confucius is most preoccupied with it. In fact it is so preoccupied that the religious presuppositions of ethics have largely faded out, and the way of life has become a great humanism. As much as the concern of Buddha was with the problem of pain, the concern of Confucius and of Mencius was with the attainment of right conduct. "Heaven" was above, watching and governing mankind, but "heaven" was best pleased not by human efforts after communion with it, but by the virtue of the "princely man." This ideal of the "Noble Gentleman," whose actions harmonize with the total order of the life of man and of the universe (Tao) is the standard of ethical striving. Ethics is a branch of human wisdom rather than an attempt to do the will of God; it is essentially humanist. The ideal is exalted, and to be pursued if need be even at the cost of life itself. Yet this doctrine cannot be said to have penetrated the depths of moral realism. It started badly by assuming man's ability to realize his own ideal, an assumption which later found classical expression in Mencius' assertion that all men have the tendency to good as water has the tendency to flow downhill; a hopeful error which the facts of life expose. This lack of moral realism matches the vagueness of the general norm of conduct, and the failure to provide any help to the weak wills of men. It is not enough to tell us that we ought to practise the virtues which harmonize with the universal order, unless it is made very plain just what those virtues are, and by what means we frail human beings are to reach them.

The story of the God-man suffering as a criminal on the cross is shocking to polite humanism, but by

unveiling the depth of human sinfulness it supplies the moral realism which it lacks. The figure of Jesus going about doing good, in perfect harmony not merely with the cosmic order but with the will of God in which that order is grounded, brings the ideal out of the mists, and gives an example to copy. Here may be set down four points in the Christian message in regard to the moral ideal, a message not only for Confucians but for ethically earnest men everywhere. (a) The character of God determines the ideal; the ethics grow out of the religion. In some religions men would not do well to imitate the behaviour of their gods, but here the noblest conduct is practised in order that men may be children of their Father which is in heaven. The doing of good means the doing of God's will. (b) The ideal has actually been realized in a human life; Jesus who is the image of God is also the embodiment of what man ought to be. He delivers our ethical as much as our religious aspirations from the vagueness which besets both. (c) Again, the Christian has the distinctive ethical *motive* of gratitude; his action is all responsive to prior divine acts, his love to the divine love which came first. He behaves in a certain way not because thereby he shows himself a superior man, nor even because that way is intrinsically right, but in order that he may be well-pleasing to God who has overwhelmed him by his grace. (d) Finally, the Christian is given the help of the Spirit, affording the divine power which alone is adequate to the attainment of the Christ-like life. Here ethics and religion are inseparable facets of the one reality, and both rest on the revelation contained in the Christian history.

We have done little more in the last few chapters than glance at the religious systems of the world, with a view to seeing how the Christian message may impinge on them. Each religion must be studied more penetratingly by the evangelist who would make his message plain to the people among whom he lives. Especially in the great lands of the East there is much that we have not been able even to mention. But sometimes an aeroplane survey of a territory suffering from famine or flood has revealed the measures for relief which are most urgent and which also will be most far-reaching in their effects. And this bird's-eye view of the wide field of man's religious striving and suffering has surely shown that the most urgent measure of relief, and the most far-reaching in its efficacy, is to tell men everywhere how God has made Himself known in the history which centres in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no alteration to be made in the main Christian affirmations. How the communication is to be made, by word and life, the missionary has to discover in each several place and time. As we earlier saw, St. Paul used in this task great freedom, and drew upon various non-Christian practices and terms in order to make his message plain, while all the time his life was a clear commentary on his message. But what never varied was the certainty that in Christ was the good news which alone could supply the deepest wants of Jew or Greek, and the "earnest entreaty" that they would open their ears to it.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHURCH

WE have seen already that the Christian Mission has for its aim not the spreading of a general goodwill, or the improvement of the condition of the world, but the communication of the special revelation of God in history which centres in Jesus Christ, and which is summed up in the first confession, "Jesus is Lord."

The acceptance of that revelation, by a process as natural and inevitable, and therefore it would appear as divinely intended, as the growth of a plant from a seed, produces a fellowship which is the Christian Church. This is not an optional society, a human association for the promotion of a cause, or a missionary method which we may choose to adopt or to reject. The New Testament calls it the Body of Christ, and sometimes strains the loftiest language to characterize it. Its life is conceived as a continuation of the whole revelational process. The mission therefore cannot regard its evangelism as complete until there has grown out of it a living Church, which will be the permanent and normal witness to that which evangelism has proclaimed. Out of the word grows the Church; those who plant the word will continue to water and cherish until they see a tree growing from firm roots and bearing fruit, a living fellowship whose spirit bears some resemblance to the Spirit of Christ. The fruit of the tree will bear in it the seeds from which its own life was

propagated. The worship and witness of such a fellowship will be an evangelistic force more powerful and more permanent than the missionary personally could command.

The Church in our own countries is frequently cried down by those who vaguely crave something called "unorganized religion," concerning which we know little more than we do about disembodied life. They have their counterpart among those "nationals" of oriental countries who would prefer Christianity to be a diffused fragrance rather than an organism. There can, it is true, be too much organization in the Church, as there can also be too little. Organization in itself is neither good nor evil; it can serve either that which is good or that which is evil, and can be efficient or inefficient. There is no ground for the assumption that religion is purer without organization. Those who decry the Church have missed the discovery, behind the empirical Church which they see, of its real nature as the New Testament describes it, much as anyone passing by the well of Samaria when Jesus sat tired beside it would have failed to discover the real nature of Him who sat there. (The fact that the empirical Church is very faulty and that Jesus was sinless does not destroy the analogy as regards the divine side of the Church's life.) Those in the sending countries who can only see the faults of the Church naturally seek to send the Gospel abroad unmediated by any organization. But they do not know the Church.

Reference must here be made to the attitude to the Church in the American Laymen's report, *Rethinking Missions*. After an introductory apology for the early missionaries to whom the Church

"seemed an essential feature of the entire Christian programme," it suggests that people were prematurely rushed into Church membership. (This scarcely accords with the stories of the almost too careful nursing and preparation given in each field to the first converts before they joined the Church.) The truths and ideals which constitute the eternal aspects of our religion should have been allowed slowly to make their impression on the oriental peoples, until there emerged groups of believers and seekers of many types, constituting, apparently without organization, the "universal church," with no creeds and no unalterable dogmas, which would find its way to the "fuller truth" which has to break upon the world.

This attitude must rest on a different view of revelation from that set forth in this book. The whole discussion so deprecates theology, doctrine, and what it calls "rigid forms and moulds," that it inevitably points away from the formation of churches such as have been from New Testament times, and in spite of its references to the Church of the future, in reality abandons the aim of Church building. "It ought to be the primary business of the interpreter of the Christian religion in the future to permeate the personal life of the individual and the fabric of human society with creative ideals and energies . . . rather than to build a church as an institution to stand out as an entity in itself apart from the larger whole of society."<sup>1</sup>

On this two criticisms may be briefly offered in addition to what has been said of the essential nature of the Church. First, we have no "creative ideals

<sup>1</sup> pp. 108-109.

and energies " to impart, save as these grow out of the special historic revelation which cannot be preached without doctrine, and which when believed creates a living society. That society in turn further mediates this revelation, not general " ideals," to the world. Give up " dogma," which ultimately means say nothing clear and authoritative regarding Jesus Christ, and you have no creative ideals or energies to communicate. Second, it is strange for the Report to advise that those who receive the message be brought by the missionary to an advanced stage of Christian understanding before they are allowed to join a church; strange because such prolonged foreign tuition must militate against the " indigenous " quality of the Christianity which is greatly desired. But more serious is the oversight of the fact of universal experience that only the Christian society, i.e., the Church, can give that " friendly help and guidance " which the new Christian needs, for the profound reason that there is no maturing of Christian growth apart from the Christian society. The Church is the appointed school of Christian living, not the post-graduate sphere for those who did most of their study elsewhere.

This difference in fundamental assumptions regarding the Church is regretted, because it tends to diminish the importance which the Societies should properly attach to some of the sound practical suggestions in the Report, notably regarding sectarianism, quality of required leadership, and the demand that the Church help the surrounding community to fulness of life.

We have no choice in this matter. We may not be content with interchange of world cultures, or

with humanitarian service. It is of the essence of our enterprise that it bring into being local fellowships of those who have received the Word of God in Christ.

Sometimes the mission has to wait long, even a hundred years or more, and to resist the temptation to transfer its aim to something else, such as the general leavening of society. Such leavening is only the preparation of the soil, though some soils take long preparation before they can become productive. History will set it down to the credit of several of the older missionary societies that in some Moslem fields, and in certain areas of India, to name conspicuous instances, they worked by faith and not by sight for generation after generation, without ceasing to look for the appearing of the longed-for Church of believers. Its growth when it comes will be all the stronger for the patient soil-preparation, and over the centuries will perhaps overtake that of churches which had an easier and more rapid start.

In a striking way the study of missions on a world scale in our own time has thrown into relief the centrality of the Church. The Edinburgh Conference of 1910 virtually discovered the "Younger Churches." With no small thrill it heard that the Lord's Day, beginning about sunset of our Saturday, in longitude 180 east of Greenwich, calls to worship first Fijians, later Christians of New Guinea, then those of Japan; and so onward right round the world the strain of worship is continued unbroken. When on our Monday morning the day of thirty-six hours ends, as it began, in the Pacific Ocean, the last lingering worshippers in the world-wide House



of God are the Christian people of Samoa and the Friendly Islands. The ancient expression "The Holy Church throughout all the world" had taken on new meaning.<sup>1</sup>

It took years to realize how much the very existence of this world-wide Church had changed the strategic situation, but the next world conference at Jerusalem in 1928 was so constituted as to be virtually a meeting on equal terms between the representatives of the older and the younger churches. All the findings at Jerusalem were deeply influenced by the representatives of the younger churches.

But the third world-conference, it was felt, must meet in the midst of the younger churches themselves, so that their surrounding presence might dominate its deliberations. Difficulties for the "sending countries" were not allowed to prevail, and when war broke out in China the meeting-place, originally fixed at Hangchow, was transferred to Madras in India. Still more significant, the whole programme was centred in a study of the younger churches in relation to the Church, its nature, its witness, its life, its environment, and its unity. The oecumenical missionary movement, within thirty years, has come to think of its primary function as assisting the growth of the world-wide Church, and for that reason is in process of undergoing a profound transformation. No longer may we think of the "Christian" West sending the light to the "heathen" East. There is eastern Christianity and there is western heathenism. The numerically and financially stronger churches of certain lands offer their reinforcement to the numerically and

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Edinburgh Conference*, Vol. II, pp. 6-8.

financially weaker churches of certain other lands, in order that the Church everywhere may spread the light of the Gospel in surrounding darkness. It is clearly recognized that churches weak in numbers and finance may be strong enough in spiritual gifts to make valuable contributions to the "sending countries." The whole development has increasingly justified the statement of Archbishop Söderblom at Jerusalem that the invisible unity of all believers in heaven and on earth, made visible on earth, revealed and obvious in word and sacraments, in prayer and in Christian life, is most clearly demonstrated in the Christian mission. "To-day there is no more apparent and momentous revelation of the reality of the eternal Church of God than the world-wide Christian mission."<sup>1</sup>

Not the least need of the present generation is that this changed situation, which for long past has been clear to missionary leaders, should be understood by the supporting constituencies of the societies. Far too many subscribers still think in terms of the conditions before the rise of the younger churches, which means that underlying their gifts is a measure of unreality which might have dangerous consequences. Instead of their money all going to support missionaries who change heathen darkness into gospel light, much of it is going to assist little groups of "nationals" to maintain their witness in a grey twilight, and the groups are too much like little aided churches at home to be as picturesque as the painted heathen. But when these givers come to see the vision of the holy Church throughout all the world they will not be thereby made less generous.

<sup>1</sup> *Jerus. Report*, Vol. II, p. 134.

This increasing recognition of the significance of the Church has necessitated the adjustment of mission constitutions, and the last twenty years has been a period of devolution of authority from the mission, which represents the church of the sending country, to the church which has grown out of its labours. Where there is episcopal government, this has meant transfer of control to the diocese, and is denoted by the term "diocesanization," an ugly word for a thing which is by no means ugly. Where other forms of church government prevail, control formerly vested in councils of the mission has been transferred to Church councils. Since diocesan and other councils resemble each other, the actual working out of these plans varies less than might be expected, and at the present stage most of the affairs formerly "mission" and now "church" are controlled by councils consisting of Christian nationals appointed by local Church bodies, with a few western missionaries. Were it not for ecclesiastical principles it would not be difficult to link up such councils in the assemblies of a united Church.

It must be admitted that strange things can happen in such bodies, of whose members some have had no training in methods of administration, their outlook has mainly been limited to their own village, their education is rudimentary, and their Christianity immature. While a surprising number work well, a few have occasional lapses, and commit mistakes which are not merely errors of judgment, but are based on an imperfect apprehension of Christian principles. Others find themselves like David in Saul's armour in the constitutional arrangements of missions. Missionaries who are minority members

are torn between the desire to see their native colleagues exercise initiative, and the unwillingness to see wrong things done. The transitional period, which cannot but be lengthy, makes large demands for patience and wisdom upon "nationals" and missionaries alike. Both are tempted occasionally to sigh for the old days when the missionary could get on with his job and the "national" left him to it, or did what he was told.

The more necessary is it for all to be clear about the reasons for working through the uncomfortable "devolution" process. The supreme consideration is that this method alone expresses consistently our doctrine of the Church. Second, transfer of authority to the representatives of the Church shows Christian courtesy towards the country in which it is being planted. Third, merely as a wise administrative measure when organized activities multiply, devolution is a useful form of decentralization. Fourth, and next to the doctrinal reason most important, devolution gives the opportunity for the emergence of indigenous quality in a church. No one can measure the handicap from which the mission church suffers on account of its foreignness.

Looking realistically at the Church as it is to-day, then lifting our eyes to the vision of it as it must become, rooted in the soil while truly Christian, depending upon no foreign organization but upon Christ its spiritual Head, inspiring and directing all Christian activities in its area, we know that the path from the real present to the ideal future must be long and stony, to be trodden with the courage of faith. We set ourselves to work with patience cumbersome constitutions and creaking machinery, and to

simplify them as far as may be. Long hours spent in committees and consultations with "nationals" are not wasted if they result in their doing the work which the missionary could more quickly have done himself. After all, his aim is not to get good works done, but to co-operate with the grace of God in bringing into being a fellowship which itself will work the works of Christ.

Devolution as a method thus rests on a deeper spirit. It begins further back at the start of the enterprise in a profound desire to work always and only with and for the Church. Roland Allen in his *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours*, may have made some over-statements, and the position has improved since his book appeared in 1912, but his message about passing on responsibility to indigent fellow-Christians from the very beginning will be relevant for a long time to come. Where missionaries have sought and enjoyed the privilege of fellowship on equal terms with "nationals," or of being led by them in Christian service, the spirit has been generated which can drive all this machinery of devolution. Without that spirit no successful devolution is possible.

This same emphasis on spirit as more important than machinery is needed in connection with the slogan "self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating" applied to the Church. The terms can be narrowly and wrongly used, though the aim which they first connoted was entirely right. There can be too much of "self" when some local congregation by these terms justifies itself in disregarding the advice and refusing to share the burdens of other congregations. Henry Venn who made in

1851 the classic statement on missionary policy in which these words occur was obviously thinking of the church in a considerable area as a unit.<sup>1</sup>

The financial aspect of self-support commonly receives sole attention, but it does not automatically follow that the church which can find more money needs less guidance. St. Paul's churches were self-supporting financially from the start, but the church at Corinth would have made some terrible mistakes if it had rejected the authority of the Apostle on the principle "self-supporting, therefore self-governing." A recent report of one church said that continual harping upon financial self-support had injured its spiritual life. In the things of the spirit even more than in finance the church needs to lean less on the mission, becoming divinely supported rather than self-supporting, divinely controlled rather than self-governing, enabled by God's grace to spread abroad His Gospel, rather than self-propagating. The only effective way of achieving all these things is after all for the body of believers to become a true church of Christ, in fellowship with the whole Church militant on earth and triumphant in heaven—which is a matter of divine grace more than of missionary method.

The mission on its part must beware of perpetuating its hold upon the church because in the opinion of the missionaries the church is not yet ready for full responsibility. The growing up of a church is as inevitable and as desirable as that of a child; the wise mission anticipates the demands of the adolescent church as does the wise parent those of the

<sup>1</sup> For a useful collection of statements of policy of missionary societies see *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, Vol. III, pp. 29-41.

child, and for the same reason, because freedom is a necessary condition of real growth. In handing over a latch-key to the restless adolescent the parent feels a sense of risk, but the risk of suppression of a developing personality is greater, and the case is similar with a church. If the church seems not yet ready for responsibility, we must remember that it can only become ready by exercising responsibility, and that churches like individuals can sometimes only learn by making mistakes and reaping the consequences. The risks are real, even the risk of lowering moral standards. But their gravity must not blind us to the fact that the Holy Spirit, not we, guides and inspires His Church, and that He is not limited to the foreign mission in the agencies He employs.

The large volume of practical experience in processes of devolution already accumulated suggests at least three general rules. First, the process should be as gradual as is consistent with steady advance. The greatest difficulties have always arisen where, as happened in emergencies in the great war, onerous responsibilities were suddenly thrust upon unprepared Christian communities. Second, the transfer of responsibility however small must be real, not nullified through excessive safeguards so that in the end the will of the mission must prevail. The Church is no toddling baby whose mother when it stumbles holds it up by leading-strings. It must be possible for the Church to take a wrong line; else it will not really learn to take the right one. Third, although finance must not figure too prominently, it should not be ignored. The mission must always be willing to let the

Church control more than it pays for, but the Church too must make its own efforts, or there is no true partnership. Whether in missions or at home, it is not good for corporate bodies to have permanent and free control of resources which they have had no share in raising. Since money is part of the reality amidst which our earthly life is set, the burden of finding it is part of life's discipline of which we have no right to deprive the younger churches. At the same time we value most their spiritual gifts, and believe that one by-product of their exercise of these will be that some religious movements, when the younger churches take real charge of them, will need less finance than they did in the West.

It is good that in these days we are realizing increasingly that a church must be truly indigenous, the natural outgrowth and expression of the corporate religious experience of Chinese, Africans or Indians as the case may be. Time was when an old priest could report with pride that his Chinese boys could say the service in Latin exactly as he had said it when a boy in Italy. We now realize that in every country the foreign appearance of our religion is almost its greatest handicap. It makes unnecessary difficulty for non-Christians to understand it, hampers Christian "nationals" in their spiritual growth, and in not a few countries arouses the suspicions of Government authorities. For still deeper reasons, the Church must be indigenous. It would be a denial of the divine creation for us to assume that the natural life of any people is incapable of being "baptized unto Christ," although apart from revelation it is lost and utterly unable to help itself. The holy city comes down out of



heaven, but they bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.<sup>1</sup> When the Church throughout the world has purified, redeemed and taken up into its own life the best culture of every people, then the purpose of God in creation will be by redemption brought to fulfilment.

We shall return later to this subject of the naturalizing of Christianity in every land. Meanwhile there is the question, What can the missionary do? Obviously, the last thing a foreigner can do is to impart indigenous quality. Noble attempts have sometimes been made, as when the missionary in India building a church copies and adapts the plan of a Hindu temple. But he cannot be quite sure of the effect on the mind of the surrounding population. There is sometimes even the danger of "accommodation" to non-Christian practice, which is a very different thing from "naturalizing" Christian practice. It is noticeable that old-established Christian congregations stubbornly resist "indigenization," and when due allowance has been made for mere conservatism, it seems that some of them instinctively fear assimilation to their non-Christian surroundings, and genuinely believe they hear the call "Come ye out; be ye separate." To them the foreign ways of the first missionaries seem safer, because more obviously different from "heathen" ways.

In this perplexity some missionaries are inclined to refuse guidance at all. The "nationals" must worship in their own way; we will tell them so, and refuse to teach them our way lest it get the force of precedent and prevent the emergence of their own.

<sup>1</sup> Revelation xxi, 26.

If this could be rigidly carried out, which fortunately is not the case, the result might be similar to the famous experiment of the philosophers who, desiring to ascertain the original language of mankind, prevented a child from having any tongue spoken to it in its early years. They were surprised when the child turned out to be dumb. Indigenous worship cannot be discovered by abstaining from teaching what we know. Unfortunately what is most liable to happen in many areas to-day is that the church carries on the worship which it believes the first missionaries taught, but does it listlessly and carelessly. Instead of indigenous quality having replaced earlier missionary conduct of worship, sheer slovenliness has intervened, and is a most serious evil.

But it must be possible for missionaries to impart their own ideals, principles and practice in worship in such a way as to show the practice to be variable, to exalt the liberty given to us in the Spirit, and to encourage every indigenous expression of true devotion. The problem is after all that of the teacher, who feels himself to blame if his pupils show no initiative. He cannot *make* a child have ideas of its own, yet the good teacher has a marvellous influence in developing that originality which a bad teacher unconsciously suppresses. A right paedagogic fostering attitude is the missionary's best contribution to the growth of indigenous quality in the Church's life and worship.

## CHAPTER XIII ·

### THE MISSIONARY'S CHANGING RELATION TO THE CHURCH

THE Church having so definitely become the centre of the picture, where does the missionary now stand? In their enthusiasm for marking the changed situation, some would abolish altogether the term "missionary" and treat the ordained man as just a minister serving the Chinese or Indian Church, as the case may be, for a few years or many.<sup>1</sup> He may well be that, and will naturally claim no different status in the Church from his Chinese or Indian fellow ministers. But there seems no reason for abolishing the term "missionary," which denotes the reality that he has been sent out, and is usually being supported, by the Church of another country. The same term covers also the women and laymen of whom the same is true. There is a curious tendency to associate with it connotations of race or authority which do not necessarily belong to it, and then to treat it as obsolete or even objectionable. But the term "missionary," like the person it connotes, can be adjusted to the new situation, and if we abolished it we should immediately have to invent a substitute.

So far there is no instance of a church saying that it no longer desires the help of missionaries. Those churches whose indigenous quality is most advanced, whatever they may say about the type of missionary

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., *The New Relationship between Church and Missionary*, G. F. S. Gray, I.R.M., April 1938.

now desired, repeatedly and with emphasis affirm that the time for the missionary's withdrawal is not yet, least of all the time for the withdrawal of the missionary woman. Anyone who realistically studies the situation of these churches surrounded by vast non-Christian populations, amongst which new hostile forces frequently emerge, knows that they are right. If through some political emergency they were suddenly deprived of all foreign help, we may believe that by the supernatural help of God they would be sustained and brought through their ordeal. But we have no right to claim divine miracles or inflict human ordeals so long as human effort could make them unnecessary.

The missionary must continue to serve the Church. In actual fact he cannot escape a certain differentiation from his indigenous colleagues as regards his origin, his equipment, his double relation to the Church in two countries and the method of his support. These things exist, and though their importance may be minimized, it is useless to pretend they do not. But the missionary is seconded for the service of the Church in the country to which he goes, and his first principle will be to claim no privileges from that Church on the mere ground of being a missionary. He will join it with the same procedure as any other member, render to it the same personal support and service, and fully identify himself with its life and worship. He will not seek to influence it by any method which is not open to any similarly qualified indigenous member. He will be happy if, as is happening in some parts of Japan, China and India, he is allotted his station and his task by a Church authority. In any case it is

his privilege to serve the Church of the future, if the Church of the present is not yet in a position to command him.

Every missionary endorses this principle, though it involves a revolution as compared with his position a generation ago. It is not surprising that in a good many places he has for a time the uncomfortable feeling that he is serving two masters, neither of which knows exactly what it wants him to do. This has happened most in China, but Christian common sense and initiative have not only worked through the discomforts but discovered new tasks of far-reaching importance for the missionary of whose former duties many have been taken over by the developing Church or its ministry.<sup>1</sup> Some old ones remain. There is still the preaching of the Word, within the Church and without, and the foreigner's deficiency in mastery of language is usually counter-balanced by his greater ability, due to better training, in expounding the Scripture. Competent expository preaching in the vernacular even by foreigners draws large crowds, which is a symptom of a widespread hunger. The missionary in most places still must take an important share in the instruction of new converts, on which depends the quality of the future life of the Church.

Generally speaking, his training has made him more perceptive of the special new needs of the time. A notable instance is the understanding of the point of view of the boys and girls, still more the young men and women, in rapidly changing social conditions. All too often the pastor who is a "national"

<sup>1</sup> See Article, *The Ministerial Missionary in China*, T. W. Douglas James, I.R.M., October 1934.

is either wedded to dignified old ways which are obsolete, or blind to the dangers of reckless change, or else vaguely puzzled by the behaviour of the young. The familiar difficulty in the "home" churches about retaining their young people is greatly intensified abroad by the revolutionary changes taking place everywhere through sudden close contact with differing civilizations. Experience has demonstrated that the missionary has certain advantages in easy sympathetic understanding and guidance of the young. He represents the new which they desire, and can help them to be both "modern" and Christian. But he can only perform this function safely if he has learned to love the best of the culture which for them represents the older ways.

Recent studies in religious education have provided the missionary, man or woman, with valuable tools, as yet little known in mission areas, both for evangelism and for church-building. In particular the missionary thus equipped can play a large part in the training of lay men and women for Christian service of many kinds, for which especially China and India are conscious of urgent need. It has been a great achievement to have trained a ministry; it will be a greater achievement to train a whole church membership for active witness. Herein lies the value of graded Sunday-schools, scouts, clubs, guilds and groups, adult education, methods of combating illiteracy, and training schools for voluntary workers.

But there is a deeper need from which the missionary naturally shrinks in humility, yet which from time to time is voiced with great insistence by

indigenous leaders, and we may not escape its challenge. It is the need for depth of spiritual living, for men and women of God. There is something wonderful in the way in which true holiness gets recognized and welcomed in even unlikely places. The younger churches make many demands of the missionary, but underlying them all is one which is best not much talked about, the demand for the saintly life.

Something must be said here about the difficulty of estimating the quality of the life of any indigenous church, if only because of the severe disappointment felt by a good many young missionaries. At the stage when, having acquired some facility in language, they feel able to judge things for themselves, it not infrequently happens that they are shocked by some of the discoveries which they make, particularly regarding the average moral level of behaviour. They are inclined to think the older missionaries may have been deceived, and are discouraged by the thought that the malicious criticisms of outsiders have some foundation. This discouragement is only slightly mitigated by their finding a few obviously saintly persons—these are exceptions. Two preliminary observations are worth making. The fact that this discouraging experience is rare amongst older and common amongst younger missionaries is significant, and cannot be dismissed by the assumption that all the older through familiarity have lowered their standards. The oriental student coming to our own shores, when persuaded to voice to other orientals the real opinion he has formed of Britain, sometimes has most surprising criticisms to make, particularly regarding the moral level of

intercourse between the sexes, due to certain manners and customs appearing to him in a sinister light. Some of the faults he finds are real; others we know to be based on misconstruction of something innocent. If he is liable to misunderstand, so is the occidental in the East.

Differences of language and custom operate more stubbornly than we commonly reckon, in ourselves as much as in other people; it takes years of patient intimacy to appreciate, in the true meaning of the word, the spiritual and moral heritage of another community. Blood and soil are realities, although they are to be dominated by higher realities in the sphere of religion. In a large part of the Church in Africa and the East, there is a heritage from primitive animism which clings long after "christianization," as truly as many ancestral features cling to ourselves which may be quite inconsistent with Christianity. The people are swimming against a strong under-tow, all the stronger because it is instinctive and unrealized; no-one can judge how hard they are swimming who forgets the under-tow.

If the force of inheritance is hard to estimate, still harder is that of environment. Those who remember the filth, the smells, and the unclean speech which surround thousands of new Christians will expect lapses as naturally as they expect bouts of malaria in dwellers in swamps. The occasional lapses are natural; what is remarkable is the moral victories regularly being won. This may not apply in the case of some from superior levels of society who have made heroic sacrifices to become Christians, yet manifest distressing streaks of weakness in their character. All too often these have a different



handicap to overcome. They were cut off, through their own noble decision, from their family and society, which means that certain roots of character were snapped, and they have not yet been able to grow strong new ones in their place. Few of us know the strength or the morally depressing influence of ostracism.

Again, easterners and westerners grade faults of character differently, and who shall ultimately say which is right? Is the anger which we too readily assume to be righteous, as serious a fault as it seems to the easterner, or the polite untruthfulness which annoys the westerner as rooted in crookedness as he supposes?

The more we reflect on such considerations, the more are we driven to confess that there are no objective measuring-rods in our possession, no impartial standards by which to estimate the quality of the native church anywhere. And those whose understanding has been most patient and sympathetic sometimes realize that a great work of grace has gone to the producing of what to others may appear a commonplace Christian character. Only God can tell where there is sincerest response to His grace which alone builds up His people, whether it be in an African village or in some London church which subscribes largely to missions; in an island in the South Seas, or in some American congregation famous for its benevolences. There is in no case human merit; there is just the undeserved love of God for all.

It is essential in this matter for the modern missionary to learn from St. Paul, who was open-eyed to all the evils in the congregations in Greece

and Asia Minor, who with equal clearness saw within and beyond them the holy Church of God, as if the faulty empirical local communities were a temporary incognito of the real Church, which was "Christ's body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." In the Epistle (to the Ephesians) from which the last words are taken, he insists that his readers are to give up living like pagans, to stop lying, stealing, sexual vice, drunkenness—and he would not say 'stop them' if they were not happening—but also says that "now unto principalities and powers—are to be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God,"<sup>1</sup> and that Christ purposed "that he might present the Church to himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."<sup>2</sup> To the modern who feels that he must cleanse his very memory of the human vileness with which he has had to deal, before turning to think and speak of holy things, it is surprising to note how St. Paul passes without sense of shock from admonition to avoid fornication to reminder of the holiness of the saints. The very sins of erring members of the empirical church recalled, by a mental reaction, the dynamic sanctity of the real eternal Church which would purge them away.

Should the ordained missionary serve a local church of "nationals" as its pastor? In general, no, because the development of a native ministry is a supremely important means for the building up of an indigenous church. In exceptional circumstances he naturally steps into any breach, as in China, where there is shortage of well-qualified candidates for the ministry, partly because the

<sup>1</sup> iii, 10.

<sup>2</sup> v, 27.

greatness of the ministerial calling, as the greatness of the organized Church itself, is as yet inadequately realized. But commonly it is wise for the missionary to avoid alike the pastorate, and any other position of authority in which he could serve as a copy-book heading to be imitated. He can serve the Church better, though less obviously, by standing behind the pastor, if he has won his friendship, in the many contingencies in which he needs a wise friend, and by taking his part along with others in the local and provincial councils of the Church. Even in those councils he will seek to play the Socratic part of intellectual midwife to others, and not be too ready to express his own opinions. If at first little heed seems to be paid to him, let him remember some Yorkshire villages which treat a new-comer as a stranger for fourteen years or more, until in some time of trouble he proves himself fully identified with the place which he has made his home. Sooner or later the missionary will win a confidence which is spiritually more fruitful because it is unofficial, and will find opportunities of vital and far-reaching service which do not hamper the indigenous quality of the church's life by foreign domination.

If this is true of the ordained missionary it is true *à fortiori* of the doctors and teachers and of the missionary women. In many countries the discovery of the essential part to be played in the Church by consecrated laymen is as vital as the development of the ordained ministry, and the lay missionary can demonstrate it in service of the Church. The woman missionary's help is needed by her Christian sisters in so many ways that no list of them need be given here. But one which is bound to become

increasingly important is by representing them in the councils of the Church, where the woman's point of view is easily forgotten, and by preparing them to play their own part in those councils as soon as they can possibly undertake it.

In short, while the missionary has ceased to be the father and mother of his people, he has a vital function to perform. In some ways he is more like the coach of a college team than anything else, though with the added difficulty that the team may not know it is being coached. When the team wins no one thinks of the coach; only the prowess of individual members of the team seems to have brought it about. But without the coach there would have been no victory. To change the metaphor, the missionary's function is largely that of the fertilizing agency. As one of them humorously puts it, the new symbol for the missionary is a heap of manure in a garden. However that may be, it is certain that some missionaries who have persistently tried to avoid authority and prominence in the Church, have yet through love and humble service exerted a strangely fructifying influence upon it. It grew strong and brought forth fruits and flowers which were its own, or rather the gifts of God's grace. Yet the presence of those foreigners, sharing, loving and praying, had stimulated what was a truly native and natural growth.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE NATURALIZING OF CHRISTIANITY

WE have always known that the faith which the missionary transplants is likely to be weak, as a protected exotic, until it becomes rooted and acclimatized in its new surroundings, but only in the present generation has the problem of the naturalizing of Christianity become one of extreme urgency. This is due to the resurgence of nationalism everywhere. In the West this was an indirect result of the war of 1914-1918. In the East it is the form taken by reaction, often violent, against the pressure of the West. We have already seen how nationalism has become for many a pseudo-religion. If it was always a handicap that Christianity outside Europe and America wore a foreign dress, to-day the handicap has become deadly. At the same time, the wistful search of humanity for a peaceful international order must have relevance to all who would propagate a universal religion.

It is necessary therefore to understand clearly the relation between Christianity, nationalism and internationalism. Recently the demands of totalitarian states have compelled Christian thinkers to undertake a fundamental re-examination of the principles involved. In some countries this has become a matter of life and death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Kirche, Volk und Staat*, prepared by German theologians for the Oxford Conference of 1937; *Church and Community*, being Vol. V of the Oxford Conference Report; and the findings of the Conference itself on "The Church and the National Community," in *The Churches Survey their Task*, pp. 71-76.

By "nationalism" in this connection we do not mean something exclusively political, but that consciousness of being a folk, a people, which the Germans express by Volkstum. It includes the sense of having a common country, history, race, speech, mode of feeling and thinking, and interests. Having all these in common is the essence of the matter, hence "community" would be the right term if it were not too frequently used for a section of a nation rather than for the whole. The phrase "national community" seems to be the nearest English equivalent to the German Volk, and the insistence upon it is what we mean by nationalism. It is not a matter of the state, for a state can include various nationalities within itself, as in the case of Switzerland, or the British Empire. Nor is it entirely a matter of race, for there are countries like America where many races join in a common national feeling. It is rather a matter of deep instinctive attachments, precious memories of the past, and hopes for the future, customs of home and society, the sense of a common destiny to fulfil in the world, and of a life nourished by the same material, intellectual and spiritual foods. All these together constitute nationality as one of the elemental facts of life, which no religious teacher may ignore. It is a force so powerful that we desire to see it not opposed but if possible harnessed to the enterprise of making known the revelation of God. St. Paul reckoned with this force in determining to be a Jew to the Jew, a Greek to the Greek, all things to all men that he might by any means save some. Every decent man West or East values his links with the immemorial past, and the least hopeful introduction of

our message would be by suggesting that those links must be snapped. So evangelism may not ignore national feeling. And since the common life of believers must be lived on this earth in a particular space-time environment, the Church must be in some way related to the nationality in which it is planted.

Nationality is to us a gift of God. It is part of His continuous creative activity which determines the bounds of men's habitations and their appointed seasons.<sup>1</sup> By His will the life of mankind is enriched by the varying gifts and the multiform experiences of all these human groups. We cannot believe that God's redemptive activity in revelation opposes His activity in creation; hence intrinsically the Christian message cannot be a denationalizing influence. Then why is it being fiercely opposed as such in many countries?

A first answer is that nationality like all other divine gifts can be abused, and in this sinful world is everywhere more or less perverted. When the collective forces are organized, whether in peace or war, for the purely selfish purposes of national egotism, this perversion takes place. Nations can be more cruel than individual persons, and by their strength inflict greater harm; under the cloak of nationalism demonic elements may be disguised. That is why Rabindranath Tagore, who with genius and fervour has exalted his own Indian heritage and interpreted it to the world, wrote a book denouncing nationalism as he saw it in operation. The German Confessional Church has rightly denounced the teaching that nationality, "blood and soil," con-

<sup>1</sup> Acts. xvii, 26.

stitutes a second revelation of the will of God alongside that recorded in the Scriptures. The actual nationalisms of the world, especially in their political manifestations, fall under the judgment of God, and the Christian message to them cannot be that of mere endorsement.

A second answer is that the God who determined the bounds of men's habitations is also the God who made *of one* every nation of men, in other words that human unity in the purpose of God is an even more fundamental fact than national variety. Madness from time to time obsesses nations with the notion that they are ringed around by strange peoples essentially hostile, or that war is a condition precedent to the emergence of the bravest character, a blood-letting necessary for the health of humanity; but this is a denial of the Christian revelation concerning both God and man. Any nationalism infected by it quite correctly recognizes in Christianity an opponent.

A third answer must be given by frank confession that in the past we Christians have often failed alike to recognize in our own rendering of Christianity the considerable admixture of cultural elements from our own national heritage, and to appreciate sufficiently the cultures hitherto associated with other religions. We are learning more clearly in these days that the uniqueness of the once-for-all revelation in Christ which we declare is in no way impaired by joyful admiration of truth, beauty, or goodness which is found elsewhere. Our revelation is based upon what God has done, and there is nothing like it. But the culture of the peoples represents what man has done, and as fellow-men we rejoice in it with a



sort of family pride. In particular we westerners salute with reverence the achievements in religion, as well as those in art and philosophy, of the great souls who have lived in the East. We have no interest in minimizing their greatness; rather do we think it likely that Christians can value it more intensely than others. We only assert that great as it is, this wonderful human achievement is no substitute for revelation; rather it must be tested and controlled by it. Revelation must gradually become its permeating soul. This applies to any culture west or east, north or south, our British culture as much as that of Africans or Polynesians. All must stand before the same judgment seat, to be condemned as to some things and endorsed as to others. We know now more clearly than formerly that until in each people those national inheritances which are not opposed to the divine will have been "baptized unto Christ," the evangelization of that people is incomplete. In the past we have thought too much in terms of single souls, separable from their people's past and present. It is time to think of whole peoples, and look for growth of churches which will be national in the sense of expressing their faith by means of those peoples' customs, worship, art, and human benevolence.

If this is a correct statement of the principles involved, their application should involve consequences of enormous practical importance. No longer can religious leaders, whether nationals or missionaries, treat the denationalizing effects of their activity, where there are such, as a trifling by-product which may be regrettable but is quite outweighed by solid benefits on the other side. It does people

grievous harm to make them foreigners in their own country. When links with good elements of their past are severed, they lose, with their past, something of their own soul and strength. "They are like shorn Samsons, full of noble purposes, but devoid of the strength to carry them out."<sup>1</sup> The missionary will use all the influence he can command to dissuade Christians from any unnecessary separation from their non-Christian nationals. The call to be separate in heart from "the world, the flesh, and the devil" is not a call to be separate in the affairs of this life from the surrounding community in which God has placed us. A conspicuous instance is the growth in India of an "Indian Christian community," with its own political and economic interests, liable at any moment to conflict with the similar interests of other "communities" or even of the "national community" as a whole. An Indian Church there had to be, and it may be that the pressure of a social system dominated by caste is alone to blame for the emergence also of a separate Christian community. But the position to-day would have been happier if a unified Indian Church could have leavened all communities without becoming one by itself, and if the Christian religion could have been free of all suspicion of "communal" interests. In the unhappy conflicts of the present probably the only thing to be done is what Christian Indian leaders are attempting, to make a wise and unselfish use of the existing communal position, to regard the Christian community as one cell or organism within the larger life of India, and to work for the abolition of political representation for any

<sup>1</sup> Zimmern, *Nationality and Government*, 1918.

religious community as such. The same principle applies to tribal organizations in Africa. Solidarity with the whole tribe is a benefit to be safeguarded by all means which are not opposed to Christian principle. If there *must* be a Christian village, the Chief may be asked to appoint a sub-chief for it from among the Christians.

The first Christians were reputed to be "enemies of the human race," and the Christian message is at first so strange to human ears that some misunderstanding is inevitable, and must be patiently borne. All the more incumbent is it upon Christian leaders not to create misunderstandings by unnecessary separation from the body politic, or by unnecessary foreignness in the outward expression of their faith.

But can all indigenous elements of life be taken up into Christianity? Not all, for in each national field have appeared tares among the wheat which God sowed in creation. Here we resist the syncretistic tendency of the times, of which the German Christian Faith is an outstanding example, to marry the Christian message indiscriminately with the national heritage, and call the issue a national Church. As has already been said, all national heritages must submit themselves to appraisal by God revealed in Christ, Who will fulfil and glorify some of their treasures, but will reject and destroy some evils which they have handed down from the ancient past.<sup>1</sup> National heritage has no prescriptive right to be admitted as an indivisible whole into the Church, whether in Japan or Germany or anywhere else.

On the other hand, the western missionary must be on his guard against the too ready assumption

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, p. 80.

that certain social customs cannot be Christianized, because they have hitherto not actually been associated with Christianity. For example, the joint family or patriarchal system presents certain features, such as the subordination of the wife to her mother-in-law, or the hampering of the independent activity of grown-up sons, which by western standards may be judged unacceptable. But some indigenous Christians who have grown up in it stoutly maintain that in its joint bearing of burdens it is essentially more Christian than the western system of the small independent family. In Africa it seems now to be generally agreed that earlier missionaries too readily assumed that customs connected with "bride-price" were incompatible with Christianity.

In all such matters in the long run indigenous leadership under the guidance of the Holy Spirit must decide what is right for the Church, but the missionary can do much by the avoidance of false starts, and by continual remembrance that western ways are not necessarily the best for everyone. There are immense problems here awaiting solution by the younger churches. In the sphere of marriage relationships there are customs which a Christian view of human life must condemn, but there are others, such as the arrangement of marriage by parents, which are in no way anti-Christian and may be better suited to particular social conditions. In the Pacific Islands and in Africa dancing has from time immemorial given vent to certain emotions, some of them religious. It would be perfectly legitimate if the "consensus sanctorum" in those regions should ultimately decide—as it has not yet done—to sanction religious dancing within the

Christian Church. In most countries a whole new etiquette of behaviour has to be evolved, particularly regarding the relations between the sexes; a new ethos has to be created, which yet is the old somehow transfigured. The younger churches must work in freedom at this colossal task, but they will be wise to reject nothing simply because it is old; rejection should be only of that which plainly involves disloyalty to Christ.

We have seen that a deep and sympathetic understanding of the cultural heritage of his adopted people is a necessary part of the equipment of the preacher from another country, without which his presentation of his message will sound foreign, however correctly he may speak a vernacular. That same equipment is even more necessary if he would help his fellow-Christians to discriminate between that which can be christianized and that which must be given up. This is not necessarily a matter of scholarly book-learning; more often it depends upon loving appreciation of fellow-men and of the things which they value. All this points towards the growth of national churches, not in the sense that nationality receives divine status as a source of saving revelation, nor in the sense of "state" churches, nor even necessarily in the sense of unitary nation-wide organizations, but in the sense of churches which have "baptized into Christ" the worthy elements of their country's inheritance, so that their fellow-countrymen can feel at home in their midst.

But the nation, like the individual, can only realize its best self in the service of something greater, namely humanity. And the church of the nation is at the same time an organic part of the holy Church

throughout all the world. To segregate itself from the universal Church would mean to cease to be a church in the full sense of the term. There have been moments of national stress, especially in times of war, when the church of one nation has been tempted to cut its connection with the church in nations opposed to its own, but fortunately the temptation has been resisted. Throughout the period which included the war of 1914-1918 the missionary enterprise more than any other was called to stand for the principle that the Church transcends all national and racial divisions. The International Missionary Council, though grievously handicapped, never ceased to function even in the darkest days. It saved the German missions from extinction, and laboured for the return of German missionaries after the war to as many places and as rapidly as could be permitted by political authorities. Some years later the stresses caused by the rise of totalitarian states led to the "oecumenical movement," whose strengthening is one of the tasks of this generation. It aims not at a shallow cosmopolitanism which ignores local loyalties, but at a true internationalism which places them in a loyalty more catholic, which ultimately is loyalty to a Kingdom not of this world. In an age when chaos and division in the political sphere threaten the destruction of humanity, the Church of God Who loved the whole world is called to demonstrate its divine life by the brotherly love which transcends all differences and over-leaps all barriers of class, social status, nation or race. The missionary movement is towards the Church Universal.

The suggestion is sometimes made that the

naturalizing of Christianity would be easier if we could be relieved of the Old Testament, and lead the people of each country direct from their own sacred books to Christ. Let their own religious traditions be their "Old Testament." There are passages in our Old Testament on a lower ethical and religious level than that of some Buddhist or Hindu Scriptures, and many Asiatics feel a certain repugnance to its anthropomorphism. This is true, and would be relevant if our religion consisted in the inculcation of moral and religious teachings, or the spread of religious experience. But it is irrelevant if our message is news of the mighty acts of God, centring in Jesus Christ, in other words of a historical revelation. We have a tale to tell of what God has done, and part of that tale is told in the Old Testament and not in the Scriptures of any other religion. We cannot tell people even about Jesus Christ Himself without those records which give to the word "Christ" its meaning, and this is only an illustration of how the New Testament generally is unintelligible without the Old. The repugnance felt by some non-Christians is due to their excessively immanentist view of the divine, of which the Old Testament is the best corrective, with its presentation of a personal God who acts, and whose thoughts are as far above ours as the heaven is above the earth. And even that repugnance is counter-balanced by the ease with which primitive peoples, and unsophisticated folk generally, understand the Old Testament narrative, and find the New Testament to be its natural sequel. If in actual fact it was only by that which is recorded in the Old Testament that God revealed Himself to mankind as one and

holy, completing the revelation by the mission, passion, and resurrection of Christ, we cannot deliver the full Christian message using as introduction Scriptures which do not so reveal His active holiness, and which do not point toward Jesus Christ. No strong and lasting Christian Church can be built up without the Old Testament, because such a Church will not really have the New. It will be like a child placed in the seventh standard without passing first through the more elementary teaching of the classes below. Certainly there are difficulties in teaching the Old Testament, but there are also difficulties in the teaching of the cross which no-one proposes to omit. The whole matter is an illustration of the danger of the wrong kind of naturalizing, which jettisons part of the message in order to make it more acceptable, instead of trying to translate the whole message into intelligible indigenous language. Of this character are all those excessive simplifications of Christianity as the teaching of human brotherhood and divine fatherhood, which are acceptable to theosophists because they establish the thesis that Christianity has nothing new to say to the older religions, but which are a virtual surrender of the faith on which the Church is built. Our task is to translate the story of God's revelation in history into terms which each people can understand, not to reduce it to a few abstract principles acceptable to those who do not believe in any revelation.



## CHAPTER XV

### MISSIONS AND GOVERNMENTS

THE missionary cannot in these days wander into any part of the world and without thought of a secular authority get into direct touch with the people. Everywhere there is a government which feels responsible for those people and consequently takes an interest in the influence which the missionary is likely to obtain over them. And the missionary makes a false start if he fails to recognize that this is entirely reasonable. True, he is conscious of the call and mission of an authority higher than human, but it is naïve to assume that the lower authority will always recognize this and adapt its own arrangements accordingly. A spiritual call in the missionary's heart does not confer a legal privilege in a foreign country.

As a simple matter of experience, the National and International Councils of Missions have found on their agenda papers frequent items dealing with "missionary" freedom, or with matters in which both a government and a missionary society were concerned. Several factors have made these more numerous in recent years, and chief of them is the following. Whereas in the second half of the nineteenth century the growth of the principle of toleration led to the easy admission of missions into colonial areas, and a government refusing admission was felt to be hardly civilized, the excessive stress on nationalism since the great war has made authori-

ties watchful if not suspicious of every outside influence. Some, e.g. the Italian Government in Abyssinia, go so far as even to exclude missions maintained by any but their own nationals. This is a time for vigilance on behalf of the proper rights of missions, and at the same time for vigilance lest improper claims be made. It would be improper, for example, to demand as a right that a definitely non-Christian state should give indirect support or protection to foreign missionary propaganda, whereas the same state could rightly be asked to give liberty for Christian life, worship and witness to its own Christian nationals.

How varied are the problems to be considered is plain from a mere mention of the Powers which govern large colonies: Great Britain, Holland, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Italy; or of the great countries of the Far and Near East, each of which has its own attitude to the work of missionary societies from outside its borders. The differences among missionary societies may be bewildering, but they are not so great as those among governments. For our present purposes a useful classification of governments may be made as (a) those which uphold a particular religion, as Egypt maintains Islam, Portugal Roman Catholicism, and some Indian Native States Hinduism.

(b) those which are neutral towards other religions, though affirming their own, such as Great Britain. The classical example is in the Proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India in 1855, "Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, We disclaim alike the Right or the

Desire to impose our convictions on any of Our subjects."

(c) those which are non-religious, with a bias against religion altogether, such as Soviet Russia or Turkey. Another classification might be made according to the stage of culture reached by the populations which governments control, because a government which had no love for missions as such might yet welcome them as a civilizing agency where it has to cope with the administration of a savage or backward people. In any case it is evident that a way has to be found through a forest of detailed problems, and we must be content here with stating a few guiding principles.

Somewhere near the root of the whole matter is our conception of the relation between Church and State. What we think about this relationship at home must affect our view of the similar relationship overseas between mission and church on the one hand and government on the other. At home no one has produced an accurate definition of the respective spheres of Church and State, yet, at any rate in the Anglo-Saxon countries, practical working arrangements have been devised by which Christian folk can render unto Caesar the things, and only the things, that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. In each country abroad such practical arrangements, rather than legally defined rights, are our objective. Large overlapping between the operations of government and of missions are inevitable, all the more because of recent developments in the functions of both. In former generations most governments conceived their duties as practically confined to protecting their subjects,

maintaining law and order, and keeping the ring between opposing interests within the country. Now they concern themselves intimately with education, health, social and economic welfare, and even with the mental and moral shaping of the life of their subjects. On the other hand missions which began by simply preaching and building churches, have gone on to interpret their message in action by extensive educational, medical, social and welfare activities. There is thus an increased area in which government and missions are doing the same things, even though from different motives. In many instances even the motives may coincide, as when a government medical service happens to be manned by officers filled with the Christian spirit. There is a distinctly missionary tone about the statement of the mandatory principle of the League of Nations, "the well-being and development of peoples not yet able to stand by themselves form a sacred trust of civilization."<sup>1</sup>

Where there is so much common ground, missions and governments can powerfully help or hinder each other. Fortunately there is an immense amount of co-operation with mutual benefit. Some governments dealing with backward races carry on their medical and educational work through missionary agency although at the charges of government, because the contact of the missionary with the people is found to be more intimate than that of the government officer. In other countries, such as India, large grants-in-aid are made to mission schools as to any other private schools which satisfy the requirements of the education code. The co-operation in

<sup>1</sup> Article 22, Covenant of the League of Nations.

education in Africa has been so extensive that if for any reason the grants of governments to missionary societies for educational purposes were stopped, many missionaries would have to be withdrawn. Thereby government secures an agency not only reliable and cheap, but close to the life of the population. The mission secures large opportunities of service, and the funds for plans which otherwise it could not carry out. Each has found in experience that it can learn from the other, and many native populations have reaped enormous benefits from the co-operation between the two.

At the same time there are dangers, for after all the aims of the two are distinct from each other. The mission must not, for the sake of government support in some of its activities, prejudice those other activities which the government cannot recognize. Yet that is what it is liable to do because of continual financial pressure. Even where as in education the mission can with a good conscience serve the government, it is seriously liable to be drawn at the chariot-wheels of a policy which was formed by others from motives by no means missionary. And if this is liable to happen with a friendly government, it is almost inevitable where the government is hostile to the main purpose for which the mission exists. All the more necessary does it become for the mission to be clear-headed and alert. Let us review a few of the difficulties which experience has revealed.

a. The most obvious are caused by governments such as those of Japan in the present, which seriously confuse the different spheres of religion and citizenship. Where the carrying out of certain

essentially religious rites is made the test of patriotism there is an obvious threat to missions and even to indigenous churches, which can only be overcome by endurance as in the first centuries of the Christian Church. It will be strange if Japan which once cordially welcomed missionaries as it welcomed all other representatives of western culture should after all play the ancient rôle of persecutor. Hitherto the government has been hospitable to missions and given liberty of conscience to Japanese Christians.<sup>1</sup>

b. Other governments, friendly to Christianity for themselves, are so nervous regarding disturbance of their populations, especially when these are Muhammedan, that they place difficulties in the way of missionary societies. The early Dutch Colonial Government in the Netherlands Indies (particularly in Bali), the earlier East India Company in India, and the Government of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan have all at times tended to extreme conservatism and caution. Missions must be careful not to increase the difficulties of which the government is alone the proper judge, and no individual save under extreme stress of conscience should break the regulations laid down. At the same time it is right to keep on reminding the authorities of the truth that "Christian things done in a Christian way will never alienate the heathen."<sup>2</sup> And it is doubtful whether Muhammedan populations

<sup>1</sup> It is recognized that the Japanese Government's repeated assertion of the non-religious character of the enforced ceremonies complicates the issue, and that in consequence different views of Christian duty can be conscientiously held in Japan. But sooner or later the government itself must find it difficult to maintain these assertions, as its nationalism takes on a more openly religious quality.

<sup>2</sup> John Lawrence in a letter to the Government of India; quoted by A. Mayhew on the title page of *Christianity and the Government of India*.

are not made more suspicious of deep designs when a government shows the semblance of an unfriendliness to Christian missions which they know it cannot feel in its heart.

Where Governments are of the extreme nationalistic type, with a strong sense of their own cultural mission, and sensitive about the introduction of other ideas which they regard as "de-nationalizing," missions have to walk warily. The sensitiveness is usually not on behalf of a native ancient culture which is endangered, but on behalf of the culture now being introduced by the governing power. If the mission can make use of agents whose nationality is that of the government, so much the better. More important are the principles laid down above regarding the naturalizing of Christianity, which when acted upon will demonstrate that the government's fears are groundless, by developing a native Christianity which is indigenous and free from the influence of a foreign power. A happy example of the overcoming of difficulties is Madagascar, where the French Government at one time was so moved by fears of "peaceful penetration" as to create serious difficulties for missions other than French, but where relationships of enduring friendliness have been established in course of time.

d. A minor difficulty which should be within the power of missions themselves to remove is the fact that even a friendly government can be exasperated by having to deal with a multiplicity of organizations which are not entirely free of mutual rivalry. Now that National Christian Councils exist in most areas, it should be possible to devise some plan whereby on all important matters missions approach

government departments, such as those for education, through a single channel. This would avoid much vexation of spirit for the officers of governments, who cannot be expected to feel the importance of the principles which sub-divide Protestant missions, and it would promote more understanding co-operation.

*e.* Not a few difficulties would be overcome by the maintenance of reasonable personal relationships between missionaries and the representatives of government where they live. The District Commissioner may appear to the missionary to be haughty, and the Superintendent of Police to be prejudiced against missions; equally uncomplimentary estimates of the missionary are likely to be formed on the other side. Quite a surprising change is wrought by sensible human contact in which a little give and take achieves any adjustments which may be necessary. The missionary, being in status and salary in an inferior position, must guard against timidity or sensitiveness. His friendliness is usually met by responsive friendliness, and if in showing hospitality he has to do it with simplicity, that never really lowers him in the eyes of his guests. It must not be forgotten that by mere shyness about such trifles he may fall into that aloofness of which he suspects the officials, and may even lose opportunities of serving them when they too need a friend.

There are certain general principles by the observance of which the mission can do its share in promoting the best relationship. Realizing that in the Christian conception of life government has its rightful place in the divine order, the missionary



must instil active loyalty to the constituted authority, respect the difficulties of the officers of government, and strive to avoid adding to them. Where the missionary is serving in a colony controlled by another country, say Portugal, Belgium or France, it is almost essential that he spend some time in that country learning its language and becoming familiar with its institutions. While it is true that Christianity must ultimately affect politics in every land, it is also true that its heralds must refuse to harness it to any current political programme, and must avoid entanglement in party strife. The missionary will never call upon the secular power for protection save in grave emergency when local fanaticism endangers the lives of converts and menaces public order. He has no doubt the same civic right as the merchant or the explorer to be taken care of while in pursuit of his avocation, but the special nature of his calling makes it inexpedient for him to use it. Nothing but harm has resulted from missions relying upon "the arm of the flesh," and the true missionary is prepared to take all risks which involve only himself.

But not many risks do so involve only himself, and here enters in a complication. He cannot shed his nationality, and if he, a Briton, comes to harm in a foreign country, the British Government cannot disinterest itself, and national questions arise. He is thus under an honourable obligation in general to obey the instructions of his consul. Consuls too can make mistakes, and no absolute rule without exceptions can be laid down, but the effort should be to follow the guidance of authority, always bearing in mind the fact that the missionary serves a kingdom not of this world. In steadiness and

courage he can find his way through most situations.

But good relations are never promoted by confusion of thought. A mission, after all, has different aims from a government, and must maintain its proper independence by clear and consistent following of them. In those activities such as education or social welfare work where both agencies are doing similar things, it is necessary to be clear how far our aims coincide with and where they differ from those of government. It is even more important to bear in mind what the mission may and what it may not ask from the government concerned. There are many things which a Christian Church of "nationals" has a right to ask of its own government which a foreign missionary agency has no inherent right to ask. More and more the effort for what has been called "missionary freedom" must merge in the effort of the indigenous church in every country to claim its birthright to worship in freedom of conscience, to educate its children in the Christian way, and to bear witness to its faith among its own countrymen. There are long struggles ahead, particularly in those many countries where liberty of conscience is not regarded as liberty to change one's faith, and disabilities are attached to conversion.

Experience suggests that proper missionary independence is not best served by seeking favours from non-Christian rulers. All too often a generous and friendly gift implies that the recipient's religion is on an equality with others. In accepting it he may be expected to fulfil certain never-stated conditions, chief of them being that he will promote general enlightenment and benevolence and avoid causing disturbance by making converts.

Since the British Government controls so many countries where missions labour, it should be a principle that wherever injustice occurs British missionaries will fearlessly raise their voices against it, especially in the protection of native rights concerning land and labour. Protest against unfair treatment of native races usually involves unpopularity with fellow-countrymen in the colony, and disfavour from the officers who have sanctioned the unfairness. But not only has it often led to the righting of a wrong, and toughened the missionary fibre in enduring hardness. It has been a method of Christian witness, by showing the public that here are people who defend those who cannot defend themselves, as the Master would have done in the days of His flesh.

At long last, the mission's best preservation of its independence is in the continual recalling of its "other-worldly" as well as "this-worldly" character. The true missionary ceaselessly refuses to become absorbed in plans which however admirable relate to this life alone. The doctor finds a mental satisfaction in healing; the welfare worker rejoices to see oppressed villagers set free from debt and building healthy homes; it is good for the teacher to watch the mind of children open out like buds in spring. But after all, the whole enterprise begins and ends with reference to another order, a spiritual and heavenly. The threads between this order and that can wear thin, and need constant watching. Were they to snap, we should have ceased to be missionaries.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SECOND-LINE ACTIVITIES

THE business of a mission is evangelism, the communication of an objective message, and the gathering together in churches of those who have accepted it. But a glance at any modern mission reveals extensive and complicated activities of an educational and economic character which aim at social welfare. St. Paul knew none of these things, and in the early centuries Christianity expanded without them. They cannot therefore be of the "esse" of the Christian mission. That is why we have called them "second-line activities," and it is well to be continually reminded that they are not in the first line, and have no justification unless they support the first line, which is evangelism and church-building. The large share of mission resources at present devoted to them is evidence that they are believed to provide such support, but these are days when it is necessary unceasingly to question the purpose and direction of everything which is being done. What then is the proper place of cultural and economic activities in an enterprise which exists to communicate to all men the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ?

In giving them this subordinate position we have implicitly denied that they can be a substitute for evangelism. They did not originate in the disappointment of missionaries who finding it useless

to try to impart the Gospel decided instead to do something more obviously useful, like curing disease or imparting information. The missionary societies would cease to support such operations if they did not believe that they assist in spreading the Gospel. The whole conception of missions in this book prevents us from believing, with the American Laymen,<sup>1</sup> "that the time has come to set the educational and other philanthropic aspects of mission work free from organized responsibility to the work of conscious and direct evangelism," unless in that sentence the whole stress is on the words "conscious and direct." Educational and philanthropic works are good in themselves; governments and all right-minded citizens ought to engage in them. But societies whose *raison d'être* is the communication to the world of a special historical revelation trespass upon other people's ground by corporately taking part in such things unless they help to communicate that revelation. If they do so help, as we hope to show by reasons which follow, the American Laymen are clearly right in the demand that "the mission's standards of teaching, or of medical service or of art or music or literature or whatever it touches, are higher, not lower, than those of secular performance."<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord had an objective message to proclaim, the impending Kingdom and the call to repentance. Yet He concerned Himself with men's bodies, and felt no incongruity in so doing. When He came across a sufferer from disease, a condition contrary to the divine will and thus a manifestation of

<sup>1</sup> *Re-thinking Missions*, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

the Kingdom *not* come, He called upon the illimitable divine resources to fulfil the purposes of the divine love, thus actualizing the Kingdom at that point. The very healing was part of His proclamation; it made real and credible the Kingdom which was at hand and in Him had begun. So He sent out the disciples to heal and cast out devils as well as to preach, for these activities made clear the words of the preaching. He set up no separate department for healing as if it were something different; word and work were one communication to mankind that the Reign of God on earth had begun. In this light we read even the great parable of the Last Judgment<sup>1</sup> which made men's whole destiny turn upon their ministry to the hungry and thirsty, the stranger or the naked, the sick or the prisoners, ministry which He accepted as done to Himself.

All this suggests the interpretative function of works of mercy. The missionary confronted with famine or relievable suffering, with poverty which stunts growth, or ignorance which inflicts cruelty, brings his Master's Spirit to bear on the situation almost without realizing what he is doing. He is not thinking about anything but the need of a fellow-man. Yet he is explaining something in the Christian message which had previously never been quite understood. There are instances of young people well instructed in Scripture who first realized its meaning for themselves through the loving care of the doctor when they became patients in a mission hospital, though they never heard the doctor preach. Preaching and works of mercy belong together as text and commentary. The only difference

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv, 31-46.

in these things between the modern missionary and the ancient disciple is that the former can bring the scientific mind, an instrument not available in the first days, to the service of the loving heart.

From the time of the prophets who looked to the Messianic future as a new era of righteousness between man and man, it has been an accepted truth, though sometimes lost sight of, that a redeemed social order as well as redeemed individuals is part of the promise of God to His children. We know from our own experience that there can be no full redemption for the individual without some similar redemption of the whole tissue of relationships amid which he lives. The mission thus has something to say to society, and must say it by work as well as word. This does not mean that a particular social programme such as socialism or communism is to be advocated as alone "Christian," for the historic revelation in Christ has refused to be tied to any human plan or arrangement, and is free to permeate all social forms. But it does mean that the Christian message offers the only secure foundations on which can be built such an order of love and justice as the prophets dreamt of, and it will not be clear if delivered in words alone. Hence the social activities of the Christian mission, which give a foretaste of the future Christian society.

It is putting much the same thing in another way if we say that it has become clear in this generation that not only are "nations" to be evangelized but ranges of life, such as modern industrialism. Mr. R. H. Tawney and other thinkers on social and economic questions consider that the Church in Britain has lost many of those young people who

should be its keenest members because it has left untouched much territory which it should be occupying. "We have been too much afraid of the paradoxical claims of Christ. The Church will either be overwhelmed or it will come to control the whole social order."<sup>1</sup> This may be too strong a statement, insufficiently allowing for the intractable sinful element in human nature on the earth which the church can never fully control. But it is true enough as witness that in its overseas work the Church may not shut its eyes to inhuman arrangements between man and man, or to the working in the East and Africa of that industrialism which has come from the West. It is obliged to engage in a few of such social activities as can demonstrate the Christian impact upon these things. That is why a whole volume of the Jerusalem Report had to be devoted to the subject of "Missions and Industrialism."

Every religion, whether Buddhism or Islam or Christianity, gradually inspires a type of civilization; every cultus in the long run produces a culture, and as we have seen in the last but one chapter, the mission has an important part to play in starting the church aright in this wider task. In some cases, such as the outcastes in India, there is so little previous culture that the task almost has to begin at the beginning. The following two sentences are a quotation from the ordinary proceedings of a mission in India: "Our Christian groups are subject to the continual pressure and influence of the caste Hindu groups adjoining them, whose social customs and habits they naturally absorb. There is need therefore first of all to win individuals in our church to a

<sup>1</sup> *Jerusalem Report*, Vol. V, pp. 4-5.



more whole-hearted acceptance of Jesus Christ, and secondly *to develop an indigenous Christian culture issuing in new social habits, customs and ceremonies in line with Christian standards.*" Here guidance in a Christian sociology plainly shows itself as part of that Church-building which is the unquestioned work of the mission. The same can be true of economics; no-one questioned the propriety of the International Missionary Council, in preparation for its Madras meeting, instituting an extensive inquiry into the economic basis of church life in India and China.

Finally, there are frequent though temporary situations in which the bearer of the Christian message would falsify it if he did not engage in some of these activities which we have placed in the second line. Converts are sometimes deprived of their possessions and boycotted; victims of famine or in some places of slavery have to be provided for; the very existence of christianized tribes or village groups is sometimes threatened by starvation through local opposition to their conversion. Where the very bringing of the Christian message has resulted in depriving people of their accustomed means of livelihood, there is a moral obligation upon the bringer to help them find some other. Here the greatest skill is required as well as the warmest love, and only hard-earned experience can give the practical wisdom to devise measures which afford temporary help without encouraging a permanent spirit of dependence which is fatal to right relationships between church and mission.

These activities of missions for human welfare thus have their rightful but subordinate place in

evangelism, as good works have their rightful but subordinate place in a religion of faith. The danger to be avoided is that of making them a substitute for evangelism, as good works are dangerous if made a substitute for faith.

### I. EDUCATION

Let us see how the above principles apply to the educational work of missions. It has become already a vast enterprise, on which many books have been written; here we are only concerned with its governing principles.

In dealing with backward people it is impossible to evangelize without at the same time educating. Merely to make the story of Jesus intelligible to New Guinea savages, to African village women, or to Indian outcaste children, it is necessary to impart a certain amount of geography and history as well as theology. And in the slow process of enabling such groups to grasp the practical significance of the story for themselves, and to accept His lordship over all their common life, no-one can say exactly where education ends and evangelism begins. The best evangelist is always an educator, and the best missionary educators always evangelize when they teach.

The same fusion may occur at more advanced stages. It is the simple fact that most missions have found the village school their most effective agency, and that without any attempt at illegitimate proselytizing. The Methodist Missionary Society once examined records of how the members of its Church in India and Ceylon had been brought to the Christian religion, and found that a much higher

proportion than had been anticipated (in Burma over sixty per cent.) owed their conversion to the mission school. The religious teaching in schools naturally plays a large part, but not the religious teaching alone. Even secular instruction given by Christian teachers may remove from pupils' minds hindrances to the acceptance of the Christian message. In India, for example, the pupil who thinks that all religions are the same, and has no conception of a historical revelation, has a stumbling-block in his path which can be best removed by such sound teaching of history as only a Christian school or college is likely to impart.<sup>1</sup>

As the process of evangelizing merges into Church building, education becomes even more inevitable. The Church will be weak if its children are not nurtured in the Christian faith and delivered from the real evils of an education which ignores religion or has an anti-Christian bias. In practice this involves in non-Christian countries that missions or churches must carry on their own schools for the sake of the Christian children. The absence of such schools is the real cause of the well-recognized weakness of some old-established churches; their young people have received an education which has led them away from Christ. Much more might be said of the importance of the truly Christian school. But it must be truly Christian, and here may be noted two serious possible dangers. First, in most countries the school work of church or mission must necessarily be fitted into a government educational system. This has its advantages as we have already

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Higher Education in India*, Lindsay Commission Report, 1931, pp. 148-152.

seen in considering the co-operation between government and missions. Sometimes the mission is able to do fruitful service to the education of a whole population. But there are governments such as Japan which desire to use the school for purposes contrary to what the mission could approve. And even with others, there are the ever-present dangers of rigidity and over-crowding of the curriculum. The over-crowding with secular subjects makes religious instruction an unimportant appendix, an optional "extra"; the rigidity prevents the adaptation of the teaching to the special needs of the Christian pupils for which the school was established. Missions must always seek freedom to experiment, and see that their schools fulfil their primary purpose at the same time that they serve the state.

A still more serious danger is that of maintaining a larger number of schools than can be staffed with competent and devoted Christian teachers. The whole value of the school depends so completely upon the teacher's personality that it is a grave mistake to resort, except in brief emergencies, to the extensive use of merely nominal Christians or of non-Christians. Ten genuinely Christian schools are worth more than fifty which have only a mildly Christian tincture.

There is an additional reason for restricting the quantity of educational work in favour of its quality, in that the time must come, and in many places has already arrived, when the control of these schools must be taken over either by the church, or by specially constituted local governing committees, whose resources both in money and in intellectual capacity will be limited.

Finally, no-one reading the signs of our times can doubt that sooner or later national governments will assume complete control of education. It is by no means certain that under such control there will be a place such as we desire for education which either evangelizes or builds up a Christian church. Therefore missions and churches do wisely to plan for such methods of religious education as do not depend upon the maintenance of schools of their own. It has been a boon to China that a one-time serious threat to Christian schools set the minds of Christian leaders upon more elastic methods of religious education of both children and adults, with the result that China has already made experiments from which all countries can learn.<sup>1</sup>

## II. MEDICAL AND SOCIAL WORK

The application of the general principles governing second-line activities to the work of healing needs no detailed demonstration; especially is its interpretative function clear to all, and its effectiveness in opening closed doors. Many a region which with dull misunderstanding prejudice resisted the spoken Christian message has understood and received it when a medical mission was established and patients were healed in the spirit of the Master. Again, what has been said of education, with a little adaptation, applies so plainly to the work of medical missions that it need not all be repeated. There is the same inevitability about healing as about teaching, alike in the early contacts with sufferers, and in the later building up of a Christian church, which

<sup>1</sup> See *Religious Education in the Chinese Church*, 1931.

cannot be strong if disease-ridden, and the same intimate association, sometimes amounting to fusion, with evangelism. Even the dangers are very similar, that of trying to do more than can be well done by the limited number of workers who are both spiritually and medically competent, or more than should be attempted with the restricted equipment and resources available. There is also in this case need to remember the future when hospitals must be taken over by local managements. Co-operation with governments has been fruitful; particularly in China the government has welcomed the contribution of the medical missions to the national health programme.<sup>1</sup> But there is the same need everywhere for alertness lest the Christian enterprise lose initiative and control, or serve other aims than the spread of the knowledge of Christ.

Until recent years less corporate attention was given to the problems of medical than of educational missionary effort, but at any rate in India and China this is being rapidly put right by the careful surveys and constant studies carried on by Christian medical associations. The detailed plans require periodical adjustment to changing conditions, such as the development of government medical services and government directed health campaigns, or the increased realization of the importance of preventive measures. But doctors and nurses no longer need face enormous problems of policy in complete isolation.

We are occupied here with principles rather than particular problems, but there is one concern for the future of medical missions which is of special

<sup>1</sup> See *Christian Medical Work and the Chinese Government*, E. H. Hume, I.R.M., July 1938.

magnitude and must be mentioned. Will the younger churches when they grow strong take over these works of healing? The answer will be determined in each locality by many varying considerations, but as regards principle it may be devoutly hoped that they will continue as much of them as their resources permit, for the following reason. One of the unnoticed mercies of life in the West has been that through the early close association of medicine with the Church, witnessed to still by the very names of famous London hospitals, it embodied in its professional and moral standards and in its altruistic medical codes an essentially Christian spirit which it has never lost. Without high standards, carried on purely for personal gain, the medical profession with its intimate access in times of stress to people's homes and persons could have been a force in the life of England of quite the opposite character to that which makes it now universally respected. The technique of medicine has been shared with all the world, and there are as clever doctors to-day in some eastern countries as in the West. Some of them also have in the course of training in the West imbibed the best spirit of the profession. But as medical colleges in the East develop under local control, and the line of the old tradition stretches out thinner and thinner, will healing become a mere profit-making business, and the sanctities be dispelled which have so long protected the body of the sufferer? It is a question of critical importance to human society. So far as lay in their power, the missionary doctors have given the profession a good start, but within a generation or two, at present rate of progress, their voice will hardly be heard amid a

multitude of others. Then the whole question will turn upon whether the younger churches set themselves to do for healing what the mediaeval Church did for it in Europe. It may well be that large as are the achievements of medical missions in the present, their most far-reaching one lies in the future, that of leavening a great profession throughout the world for all time.

As to the many other forms of missionary social service, it is essential to keep their aim and direction clear, or the mission would soon be swamped by a variety of well-intended labours which obscure instead of demonstrating that which it exists to set before mankind. We are not commissioned to create the perfect social order, and have no expectation of putting humanity wholly right. For that we look to the new heaven and new earth which are to be God's gift, not of man's devising. If we speak of christianizing social relationships, we do not mean more than the insertion of the leaven of Christ into that complex tissue which must remain imperfect and in some sense diseased as long as this is a sinful world. We have no patent system of social welfare apart from the redemption of the men and women who form society; our experience is that all systems break down somewhere through human weakness. We have made no such brilliant success in the West in applying Christianity to the problems of industrialism that we can face with anything but modesty the similar but more colossal problems in the East. With our increased knowledge of anthropology, we know the danger of sudden jerks to the social order, or of pulling up roots instead of grafting in new life, and must attempt all changes with care and soberness.



But the Christian may not see preventible injustice or suffering and stand by with folded hands, least of all the herald to a new country of a Master who spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan. The love of God can be declared in some situations better by acts than by words. In face of appalling social evils in town and village, there must be something which the mission can do. Sometimes its very effort and attitude have the effect of awakening the public conscience. In a surprising number of instances already reforms of particular evils which were carried out by the appropriate public bodies or government agencies were first of all advocated by some missionary body. Christians as such are no better and no worse qualified than other people for attacking intricate economic and social problems, but they have in them that which makes them profoundly concerned for their fellow men, and out of that concern practical suggestions are born. By exemplifying the love of man which issues in practical service the mission demonstrates the spirit with which its Master was anointed for His ministry to the needy.<sup>1</sup> And if concurrently it is speaking of Him, its works of mercy are the clearest exposition of its words. Moreover, just as the mother of a sick child because of her anxious love is sometimes able to point out to the expert doctor some vital symptom, or it may be even to suggest some detail of treatment, which has not occurred to his better qualified but less concentrated attention, so the Christian mission may well be the first to feel serious concern over some dangerous social symptom, and sometimes even can suggest the most effective measures for a cure.

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv, 18, cf. Mt. xi, 5.

Within these limitations, and in this spirit, the Christian mission can do a few things which point the way forward. What it has already done is by no means negligible. Alike in China and in India it has pioneered in effective dealing with opium. In Africa it has sometimes (by no means always) succeeded in defending the rights of natives to their land. In certain eastern cities it has initiated activities which have resulted in public action reducing prostitution. It has taken the lead in bringing new life into stagnant villages, and in towns it has co-operated with other agencies in the clearing of slums and in tackling some of the evils of industrialism. Some useful labour legislation, when its history is traced back, is seen to have originated in the doings of Christian organizations. The experience already gained suggests the following two general conditions to be observed.

Wherever possible, the effort should be united, representing all the Christian forces available; only so will it be treated seriously. Careful study, and if feasible the advice of real experts, must precede the laying down of a programme. It was entirely wise that when it could do so the National Christian Council of China summoned to its aid the chief woman inspector of factories in Britain<sup>1</sup> and the similar Council for India called in expert help to survey the industrial field of India.<sup>2</sup> The Department of Social and Industrial Research, established in 1929, with an office at Geneva had to be called into being by the International Missionary Council

<sup>1</sup> See *Humanity and Labour in China*. An Industrial Visit and its Sequel, A. M. Anderson, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> See *Indian Industry*, M. C. Matheson, 1930.

to provide the research material which missions need, and itself produced a valuable report on the situation caused by mining in Northern Rhodesia and Katanga.<sup>1</sup>

The mission in all its social efforts must co-operate with every agency, private or official, which is striving to attain similar purposes, but always under such conditions that its own identity is safeguarded. Its motive, after all, is distinctive because Christian; its supreme interest is the fulness of life Christ came to bring, which the social activity is to body forth in the sight of men. The cup of cold water which it offers is "in Christ's name."

The most conspicuous demand for social service in the present day relates to the rural areas where most of the labour of missions is carried on. A thousand million people are said to be living in villages, a fact to which mission policy is slowly being adjusted. In many countries the natural beauty of the countryside masks the poverty, ill-health, ignorance and mental stupor of the men and women who dwell in it. While it is true that simple dignity has marked some who tilled their ancestral fields and passed on traditions of rural culture from generation to generation, it is still more true that these traditions are suffering corrosion under modern conditions, and that the vast majority of villages in Africa and the East desperately need new life. If Christianity is for the whole of life, it must be capable of serving as the pointer to a wholesome rural civilization.

Many hopeful experiments have been carried out: here too the Christian expert has been called in, and for China and India the way forward has been

<sup>1</sup> See *Modern Industry and the African*, London, 1933.

outlined.<sup>1</sup> The plan is to select village centres where strong Christian forces can be brought to bear, and in a group of ten to fifteen villages to join together all persons of intelligence, goodwill, and powers of leadership, for the service of the whole community, Christian and non-Christian alike. All the village problems, debt, faulty methods of cultivation, ignorance, ill-health, lack of amusements and books, are to be tackled as far as possible simultaneously because they are closely related to one another. Everyone's co-operation is welcomed, but the Christian church is relied upon to provide the main driving force. Use is to be made of the evangelistic opportunities which occur naturally through the contact between Christian and non-Christian in the service of others. The attempt will be made to secure such a school as will really prepare the boys and girls for life in a village community, and will also become a centre for adult education. Co-operative societies are to be formed and village industries promoted, especially those which can be carried on when there is no work in the fields. The village is to be cleaned up, the haunts of mosquitoes treated, and the best simple means of personal hygiene and care of health to be taught. Visits will be secured from experts, in many instances government agricultural officers or registrars of co-operative societies. Play and recreation will be fostered, dramas produced, lantern lectures or gramophone concerts given, and so far as may be the villagers will

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Mission in Rural India*, K. L. Butterfield, 1930. Dr. Butterfield produced a similar report for China which led to much action, and the National Christian Council for Religious Education has given special attention to rural areas. See the section "Work in the Rural Church," *Religious Education in the Chinese Church*, pp. 115 f.

be inspired to carry on all these things themselves. As centre and core of the whole the life of the church must be strong, in its worship and in its practical service of the whole community.

This plan for "rural reconstruction units" sounds ambitious, and is only possible where there is the enthusiastic co-operation of many who desire to serve their fellows. But there are not a few places where at least a portion of this programme can be carried out, and it is something to know the best way of working towards the rural Christian civilization of the future.

At the same time the rural worker must have patience to be content with advance which if real is better slow. Civilizing in a hurry, and rushing the pace for the villager, may destroy a valuable simplicity, and bring impoverishment through unnecessary increase of wants. It is good to secure for the villager a water-supply, and even electric light if that is economical for him. But there is no need to make him "flick-minded" or "telephone-minded," or to give him more expensive tastes in food and drink. Some of the artificial stimulation of wants in our time, in the East, in Africa, or in the South Sea Islands, is due to other people's desire for markets more than to genuine desire for the people's welfare. Wise words on this were written by G. Warneck as long ago as 1883. "It is a two-fold cultural contact which the mission has to maintain—a struggle against the heathenish unculture, and a struggle against the Christian over-culture—and we suspect that the latter is the more difficult. Seven-league-booted strides . . . are very destructive, and it requires wisdom, self-denial, patience and courage to

put bit and bridle on them. . . . In the midst of a culture-intoxicated generation the mission labourers should be, in the full Bible sense of the term, sober men, who by thoughtfulness and moderation . . . shall represent a *sound, natural and gradual progress*.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Missions and Culture, Their Mutual Relations*, Gustav Warneck, 1883.

## EPILOGUE

THIS revision of the principles which govern the overseas work of the Church to-day has failed unless it has shown that work to be deep-rooted in the redemptive purpose of God. One matter has hardly been touched, and it is the most important of all, namely the life of the missionary. We have looked again at the Christian message, and found it more relevant than ever to human need. We have not spoken of the messenger, save indirectly, because his crucial importance needs no explaining, and because the New Testament long ago said all that really needs saying about him. He has to find his way through all the intellectual and practical problems mentioned in this book, and often they are perplexing and baffling enough. But they are child's play in comparison with the problem of living a life whose message and witness are unmistakable. Every missionary knows it, and casts himself upon that grace which alone is sufficient for these things.

Nor have we spoken of the future prospects for the Church's expansion, for the reason that all forecasts, whether well or ill founded, are in a measure irrelevant to those who have heard God's commands and promises. From the time of the Hebrew prophets onwards, faith in the living God has enjoyed a deep certainty of His reign, so near at hand that its powers are present to those who believe, yet to be consummated in such a day and hour as not even the Son of Man on earth could know. That certainty must suffice us. A fillip has sometimes been rashly

given to the missionary zeal of eager youth by the suggestion that if only this or that eastern country could receive a sufficient additional number of missionaries for the next ten years it would "become Christian." But a country's conversion is never so simple a matter as that. The long story of the spread of our religion in the past bids us be sober. But it also bids us be certain, and labour faithfully in the deep peace and contentment which certainty gives. Whether ours be the joy of rich harvesting or the different joy of believing a promise whose fulfilment we have not seen, both are rooted in the blessedness of doing the will of the only Lord great enough to satisfy our own need and the need of the whole earth.



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*Bibliotheca Missionum*, Streit-Dindinger, Aachen 1916-1936, 9 volumes, an amazingly exhaustive account of books on Roman Catholic Missions, country by country, in all languages, the language of the book itself being German.

*International Review of Missions*, Edinburgh House and Oxford University Press, a quarterly magazine, with authoritative articles on all subjects connected mainly with Protestant Missions, some also concerned with Roman Catholic Missions. Includes in each issue valuable bibliographies of current books.

*Evangelische Missionslehre*, G. Warneck, Gotha, 2nd Edition 1902, 3 volumes. A comprehensive study of fundamental mission doctrine. Though the first edition was published in 1892, its discussion of some subjects, such as "individual conversion or christianizing of groups," is surprisingly up to date.

*Directory of World Missions*, Ed. Joseph I. Parker, London, 1938; gives particulars of Missionary Societies, Colleges, Co-operative Councils, and other Agencies of the Protestant Churches throughout the world.

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*World Missionary Atlas*, International Missionary Council, 1925, contains maps which show all mission stations.

*Conspectus of Co-operative Missionary Enterprises*, International Missionary Council 1935, a complete and reliable account of the numerous organizations and projects carried on by various societies in co-operation, as in January 1934.

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*Re-Thinking Missions*, New York and London, 1932, an inquiry into (mainly American) Missions after a hundred years, by American laymen. Highly stimulating and provocative, but over-influenced by left-wing theology. Its additional six volumes of *Regional Reports*, New York and London, 1933, are a rich quarry of information on missions in China, India and Japan.

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*The History of Primitive Christianity*, 2 Vols., John Weiss, London 1937.

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Stock's *History of the Church Missionary Society*, 4 volumes, London 1916.

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*History of Missions in China*, K. S. Latourette, London 1929.

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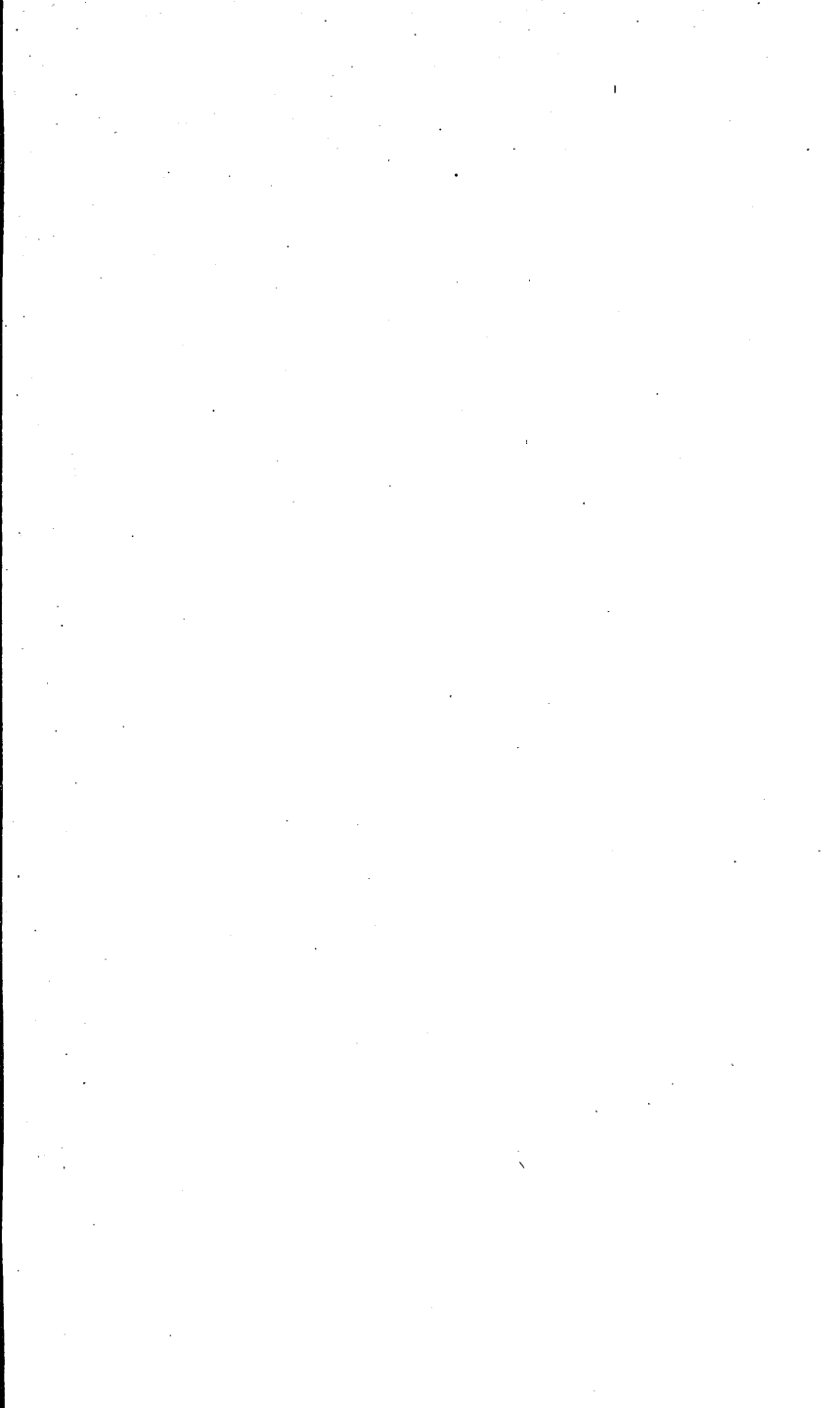
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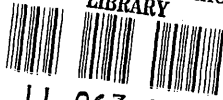
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